

A HISTORY OF AMERICAN PURITAN LITERATURE

EDITED BY

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A HISTORY OF AMERICAN PURITAN LITERATURE

For generations, scholars have imagined American puritans as religious enthusiasts, fleeing persecution, finding refuge in Massachusetts, and founding “America.” The puritans have been read as a product of New England and the origin of American exceptionalism. This volume challenges the usual understanding of American puritans, offering new ways of reading their history and their literary culture. Together, an international team of authors make clear that puritan America cannot be thought of apart from Native America and that its literature is also grounded in Britain, Europe, North America, the Caribbean, and networks that spanned the globe. Each chapter focuses on a single place, method, idea, or context to read familiar texts anew and to introduce forgotten or neglected voices and writings. *A History of American Puritan Literature* is a collaborative effort to create not a singular literary history but a series of interlocked new histories of American puritan literature.

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Religion and Politics. I am fortunate to work with such generous and encouraging colleagues. I was also fortunate to work on this book with such an excellent colleague beyond Wash U: I could never have done this project without the wisdom, intelligence, good humor, and perseverance of Kris Bross. Beyond the academy, I am forever grateful to my family for the love and support they have always shown. This volume, in particular, I want to dedicate to my father, John Van Engen, who has always modeled for me both the rigor and the rewards of a scholarly life. I grew up knowing that books and manuscripts matter, even (or especially) very old ones, and that the life of the mind is a life filled with wonder and awe – and most certainly worth the pursuit. I am a scholar, in large part, because of him.

Introduction

Kristina Bross and Abram Van Engen

American puritan literature does not exist. To be sure, puritans wrote and even published texts in America – though many of their productions were printed in England or Europe. But throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, those writers believed themselves to be English, not American. Even if American puritan literature does not exist, however, American puritan literary history certainly does. We can understand why if we think about how such a history supported and illustrated nation-state identities in the making. American puritan literary history was not laid claim to by Britain, but by the United States, and that claim was made in order to establish a “seedbed for the later flowering of a native literary tradition.”¹

Consider a simple demonstration: when the publishing company W. W. Norton decided to produce a new anthology of American literature in 1979, it knew right where to begin: with New England puritans. The first text in the anthology is the “city on a hill” sermon by the first puritan governor of Massachusetts Bay, John Winthrop, called *A Model of Christian Charity*. For the prior few decades, scholars had been pronouncing this sermon fundamental to the shape and meaning of American literature, which is exactly how the 1979 Norton anthology positioned it. After Winthrop’s sermon came several excerpts from *Of Plymouth Plantation*, the historical journal of William Bradford, who traveled on the *Mayflower* in 1620 and led the so-called Pilgrims of Plymouth for thirty years. From there, the anthology moved steadily forward through four other representative puritans – Anne Bradstreet, Mary Rowlandson, Edward Taylor, and Cotton Mather – transitioning smoothly from puritan New England into

¹ Raymond F. Dolle, “The New Canaan, the Old Canon, and the New World in American Literature Anthologies,” *College Literature* 17.2–3 (1990): 197. See also Joe Lockard and Jillian Sandell, “National Narratives and the Politics of Inclusion: Historicizing American Literary Anthologies,” *Pedagogy* 8.2 (Spring 2008): 227–254.

the eighteenth century and the era of the Enlightenment. In 1979 the story of early American literature was fairly straightforward. It began with the literature of the puritans and marched from there to the New England writers of the nineteenth century – with hardly a glance at anyone else along the way. This was an account of American literature that made its origins, developments, and distinctions dependent on a unique New England tradition rooted in American puritan literature.

Four decades later, the Norton anthology of American literature has radically changed, in part because later anthologies brought competing visions of American literature to the market. In particular, the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, first published in 1989, successfully challenged the presentation of puritan New England as the sole source of American literature. The Norton responded to these pressures from Heath and others, gradually adopting the view of its competitors so that the most recent editions of the Norton anthology present American literature as encompassing a much broader understanding of “America” and a much wider sense of the cultures that comprise it. The ninth edition of the Norton anthology (2017) now begins with Native American oral traditions and proceeds with texts from New Spain. When it eventually turns to English colonial ventures, it starts with passages from Thomas Harriot and John Smith. Only on page 129, well into the volume, do we come across Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*, which is now positioned before Winthrop’s sermon. The story of American literature has moved from a tale of puritan destiny to a narrative of plurality, diversity, encounter, and exchange. As the ninth edition explains, “conflict and violence were major forces shaping this new world. Individually and collectively, these writings demonstrate that ‘discovery’ entailed a many-sided process of confrontation and exchange among heterogeneous European, American, and, eventually, African peoples.”² The puritans have been displaced. Scholars (including the authors and editors of this collection) no longer consider them the origin of America, but one of many cultures in a crowded American scene.

More tellingly, the constitution of puritan literature has itself been altered. In 1979, the Norton anthology turned to the puritans for their unwavering sense of purpose and their heightened sense of identity – enhanced through what it identified as “typology.” Typology, the editor explained, “was an ingrained habit of Puritan thinking” that “made them

² *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 9th ed., ed. Robert Levine et al., vol. A (New York: Norton, 2017), 7.

compare themselves, as a chosen people, to the Israelites of old, who had been given the promise of a new land.”³ From such thinking, supposedly, arose all the influence of puritan literature on the American strand. According to that 1979 Norton anthology, these early English settlers of New England began the American idea of the United States as a “redeemer nation.” As the editor wrote, “Bradford’s account of a chosen people . . . is ingrained in our national consciousness.”⁴ In consequence, the passages chosen to represent and exemplify American puritanism emphasize precisely this sense of chosenness.

Like the rest of American literature, the composition of puritanism – what counts and who it includes – has broadened. Dissenters, such as Roger Williams, who did not appear in the first edition of the Norton, now have prominent places. But even among the more “orthodox” puritans, a different sense of literature, focused on an expanded understanding of its cultural work, has led to new additions: the hymnbook of the puritans, known as the Bay Psalm Book, now appears, as does the popular didactic poetry of the minister Michael Wigglesworth. Still more, among those authors who have remained the same from one edition to the next, the selections have changed. Passages from *Of Plymouth Plantation* now register as not just the “account of a chosen people” but the fact of encounter with Native Americans. Confusion reigns beside confidence. Bradford’s narrative of the devastating Pequot War (1636–1638), which was not included in the 1979 Norton, now comes embedded among selections labeled “Troubles to the West,” “War Threats,” and “A Horrible Truth.” The final Bradford passage in the Norton, titled “Proposed Removal to Nauset,” is not about the lasting significance of the Pilgrims but instead about the looming threat of their passing away. Through nine editions of the Norton anthology, over the course of forty years, what students encounter when reading *Of Plymouth Plantation* has been dramatically transformed.

As this rather straightforward example draws out, the history of American literature is not a simple tale of development from earlier to later stages of a monoculture, or the narrative of how one style leads to its successor, or how one idea generates the next. We no longer move from the puritans to the Enlightenment to the Revolution. Today, American literature is much more heteroglot, multiple, piecemeal, varied. It is a story

³ *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 1st ed., ed. Ronald Gottesman et al., vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 1979), 4.

⁴ *Norton Anthology*, 1st ed., 2.

of continuing presences, each voice adding to the mix and no voice ever disappearing without leaving its trace. A prior age of scholars longed for – believed in – a coherent, unifying narrative of American literature; a new age of scholars accepts that no such narrative will emerge.

This broader change in the field has, inevitably, altered the way scholars approach their study and understanding of the puritan literature generated in America. A renewed interest in American puritans places them more firmly in the context of a much more interconnected Atlantic and global world. With a stronger sense of their relations and a better account of their purposes and intentions (no longer tied to the eventual creation of an exceptional nation), new texts have emerged and old texts have been reimaged. Beyond revisions to the anthology, laborious editing projects, such as that of the team bringing out Cotton Mather's *Biblia Americana*, Laura Liebman's edition of Experience Mayhew's *Indian Converts*, Kelly Wisecup's edition of Edward Winslow's *Good News from New England*, the Early Caribbean Digital Archive, and many more such projects, offer fresh writings and frameworks for study. Careful reconstructions of early American printing, writing, and rituals; new explorations of early American science and its relation to religion; intricate studies of environment, gender, and race – as the chapters in this collection demonstrate – all this and more has transformed puritan studies. The renewed interest has witnessed not just the production of many new monographs on these various topics but also a collection titled *American Literature and the New Puritan Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), a special issue in *American Literature* devoted to “post-exceptionalist Puritanism,” and a forthcoming special issue of *Early American Literature* on “Reframing 1620.” All of this work means that the puritans of today are not the puritans of old. Yet no book has attempted to capture or present the reconfigured understanding of puritan literature and its history for scholars, teachers, and new students alike. That is what this volume aims to do. In the 400th anniversary year of Pilgrim Landing, we offer a sense of where puritan studies stand with pointers toward where they might go – an account of American puritan literature accessible and useful to a broad range of teachers, students, scholars, and readers.⁵ We intend this book not just for

⁵ Bryce Traister's introduction in *American Literature and the New Puritan Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) offers an excellent overview of how puritan studies has changed. The rest of the pieces in that collection attempt to push puritan studies further. This book complements that collection by summarizing from a series of discrete angles the changed field of puritan studies while pointing toward the new directions it can and is pursuing.

laborers in the field but for new students and those who work in fields tangential to puritan studies.

The idea of an anniversary for Pilgrim Landing, however, reveals the tension in producing a collection devoted to puritan literature at this juncture in American history. Pilgrim anniversaries were traditionally meant to celebrate and venerate an exceptional story of America rooted in New England and attributed to the singular virtues and values of the puritans (see the Prologue). That is not the purpose of this collection, and, indeed, it can feel a bit risky to create a collection of essays exploring puritan literary history in America at the present time – precisely because it may seem to signal a return to outmoded narratives of American exceptionalism.⁶ Because puritan studies in America was construed long ago as a starting point for a triumphalist history of the United States, it is always in danger of being weaponized. We in no way wish to add to the arsenal.

Given that early American literary scholars today reject the exceptionalist narrative that once was rooted in puritanism, it may seem surprising to see so much attention paid to puritan literature. But as scholars we must continue clarifying the puritans, their writings, and their influence for future students. For however clear the exceptionalist fallacy is to specialists, the idea of an exceptional nation rooted in freedom-loving Pilgrims has not been disrupted in popular culture. For that reason alone, while it is essential to recover other literary traditions and voices, we may not simply set aside the idea of American puritan literature or cede its analysis to others.⁷ Instead, as with other cultures in early America, we have to reconceive, revise, and re-present puritanism for a new generation.

The anniversary of Pilgrim Landing, therefore, serves as an appropriate time to collect this scholarship and explain what has changed. With this volume we intend to serve three goals: (1) to introduce teachers, scholars, and new students to the complicated and nuanced tradition of puritan literature in America, set within broad historical, methodological, and geographical contexts; (2) to bring together new methodologies for,

⁶ As our colleagues in medieval studies have recently experienced, our moment is one in which some wish to “reclaim” some grand tradition of Anglo-Saxon cultural supremacy (see J. Clara Chan, “Medievalists, Recoiling from White Supremacists, Try to Diversify the Field,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 16, 2017; Nell Gluckman, “A Debate about White Supremacy and Medieval Studies Exposes Deep Rifts in the Field,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 18, 2017).

⁷ As Sarah Rivett reminds us, “Outside of the academy, we also live in a world that does not grasp the subtlety of our theoretical interventions. The conservative revolt that we have been in the midst of for some time does not share our hesitancy with the origins thesis and, moreover, gains momentum from an exceptionalist framework despite our best efforts to dismantle it.” Rivett, “Religious Exceptionalism and American Literary History,” *Early American Literature* 47.2 (2012): 392.

approaches to, and analyses of, this literature; and (3) to suggest new directions and next steps in the field, including what the contours of such a field ought to include.

Places and Approaches: Situating Puritan Literature

In order to accomplish our goals, we approach literary history as a series of revisitations. Literary histories are dynamic and provisional – contingent on the recovery of forgotten or lost texts and responsive to changing critical perspectives and new understandings of historical contexts. Doing literary history means engaging in the effort to see from a new angle what before had gone unseen, developing the capacity to read in a new way what before had been read over, and practicing the skill of reading carefully what before might never have been read at all. In that sense, we see literary history as a method of continual recovery and recontextualization, moving texts around each other so that more texts appear – and all of them appear new.

This collection, therefore, is a collaborative effort to create not a singular, straightforward narrative of American puritan literary history but a series of interlocked histories – different authors, genres, topics, and concerns revisited by each approach and resituated by studies of place. All the authors in this book are mindful of historical context, but some chapters carry out their revisitations chronologically, while others dwell in selective close readings to highlight the way an approach can be used to understand puritan texts from different eras or generations, opening the possibility of chronological development but ultimately providing a different angle of vision that may or may not be tethered to a historical narrative. It is the compilation of these perspectives and approaches that constitutes a broader understanding of puritan literary history as a whole. “History” is not just an account of the period covered but an accrual of perceptions – a close attention to textual detail that results from ever-shifting approaches, new questions, and novel explanations.

Textual detail, then, remains the focus. We do not offer a history of American puritanism, but a history of American puritan literature. Yet as will be clear from even a cursory glance at this volume’s table of contents, we take as a given that a narrow definition of “literature” (encompassing only poetry and long-form fiction) will not get us very far. Puritans wrote and appreciated poetry, but of course modern novels were more than a century away from the starting point of this literary history. Early American literary studies defines “literature” generously, and so does this

volume, counting as “literary” the many and varied forms of imaginative writing that characterize alphabetic literacy among the puritans of early America.⁸ Broadening the literary implies methodologies that emphasize formal elements (such as conventions) while contextualizing the intended effects of various texts, including an examination of how writers sought to achieve those intended effects. Each chapter discusses forms that were popular and widely read, influential in their own moment or in later American literature. As a compiled history of American puritan *literature*, we focus therefore on the genres, structures, contexts, places, productions, printings, performances, and possible meanings of language in American puritanism.

But what makes any of it “American”? A key question for the volume is how to define that term in this period at all – a problem that has dogged scholars for generations. In literary studies, “Americanness” has most often been identified geographically (works published or written primarily in North America) or biographically (works published by authors who were born in or migrated to North America). “American Puritan literature” has traditionally been even more narrowly circumscribed as “New England Puritan literature.” That is, puritan literature in America was for the most part produced by English men and women living in the United Colonies (Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, New Haven) – to which we might add the occasional voice from Rhode Island, Maine, or Virginia.

On the one hand, the essays in this collection hew closely to the biographical approach; key texts in each chapter are often written by puritan men and women who were born in or who emigrated to New England. On the other hand, the collection resists an insular understanding of these writers or the puritan literature they produced. The examinations and explanations in each chapter expand the subjects and genres of study through contextual links that reach far beyond the boundaries of New England. We see exemplary texts as connected to, and continuing, traditions that take for granted a broader sense of “America” and its many influences: English literary forms, traditional Native American beliefs and practices, European cultural customs. Part I of this book, “Places,” in particular makes clear both that puritan American

⁸ This volume’s focus on alphabetic print materials is, admittedly, a limitation. While some chapters include discussions of other media – most notably, wampum – puritans and those who responded to their presence in America used a wide variety of media beyond print to inscribe their experiences.

literature should not be understood only as a product of New England and that the puritan literature of New England can only be understood through its connections to the rest of the world.

Thus, in order to draw out the fascinations of puritan literature and highlight its many different facets – surveying what we have learned and pointing at what this literature still has to teach – we have organized this volume into two basic parts, with a Prologue and Afterword. The Prologue orients readers to the older, classic tradition of American exceptionalism based in the Pilgrims and puritans. It explains how that tradition arose among politicians and historians in the early republic, sketching its developments through the nineteenth and twentieth century and ending in 1990, when a recognizable shift in puritan studies began to emerge. The chapters that follow capture that shift. In Part I, we resituate American puritan literature, highlighting the web of connections that informed what the puritans had to say. Puritan literature comes to us by way of Native American survivance, British precursors, global networks, Caribbean crosscurrents, European dialogue, and colonial North American intrigues. In Part II of the book, “Approaches,” we then revisit puritan literature from many different points of view, asking how each particular interest can open this literature to a new understanding of its form, function, reception, history, and influence. Together, these places and approaches offer an understanding of the new literary history of American puritan literature.

The Puritans

But who were the puritans? If “history,” “literature,” and “American” are all hard to define, so is the term “puritan.” The puritans had a massive impact on the early modern history of England and New England, and yet no scholar can quite agree on how exactly to define them or their influence. In the absence of consensus, scholars must still attempt to explain this movement, these people, and the literature they left behind. Broad outlines of agreement can be summarized. First, the puritans were English Calvinists. That is, they followed the teachings of John Calvin, a sixteenth-century influential reformer in the city of Geneva who wrote a systematic theology called *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Now known primarily for the doctrine of predestination, Calvin’s *Institutes* actually spent far more time and attention on other matters, focusing on such issues as the sovereignty of God, God’s accommodation to human weakness and needs, the power of scripture, the meaning of grace, and the

constitution, commission, governance, and purpose of the church.⁹ At the same time, defining puritans as English Calvinists does not necessarily tell us all we need to know, for England was filled with Calvinists in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century, and many of them were not puritans. Moreover, while puritans followed Calvin's thought, they did not see him as a special revelation in his own right. Instead, he was one of many thinkers attempting to make appropriate sense of scripture, and their theology took shape through conversation with a wide range of reformers who were in conversation with Calvin and Calvinist thought.¹⁰

What separated the puritans from fellow English Calvinists, then, had to do with the intensity they applied to certain theological matters. One way to distinguish the puritans from their peers is through the phrase "hot Protestants": the puritans were hotter than others, more zealous, more intense, more persistent, and more concerned about the unreformed structures of the English church. When the Reformation came to England under Henry VIII (1509–1547), modest reforms began to alter the ceremonies and constitution of the church. Henry VIII's son, Edward VI (1547–1553), pursued a more ambitious agenda of reformation, but his reign was short-lived, and his successor, Mary I (1553–1558), tried to remake England as a Catholic country. After she died, reformers in England felt Elizabeth I (1558–1603) had great promise as a ruler who would pursue thorough reform. While Elizabeth promised to keep the nation Protestant, however, she did not feel compelled to reinvent the church from top to bottom. The Elizabethan Religious Settlement aimed at a unified middle ground between the forms of the Catholic Church and the new structure and feel of English Protestantism. It was this settlement,

⁹ At the time, moreover, predestination did not necessarily separate one kind of Christian from another. That doctrine was held in common across a wide range of believers, including both Protestants and Catholics. See Baird Tipson, *Hartford Puritanism: Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, and Their Terrifying God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ There are many good introductions to puritanism. For a brief, accessible one, see Francis Bremer, *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); for a more comprehensive, still accessible introduction, see Michael Winship, *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019). Another good starting point remains the biography of John Winthrop by Edmund S. Morgan that lays out the passions and concerns of many puritans. See Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006). Parts of what follow draw from Abram Van Engen, "Puritanism," in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Atlantic History*, www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199730414/obo-9780199730414-0198.xml; and Abram Van Engen, "The Puritan Culture of Letters," in *Blackwell Companion to American Literature*, ed. Susan Belasco, Theresa Strouth Gaul, Linck Johnson, and Michael Soto (Oxford: Blackwell, 2020).

this compromise, that drove some Protestants into zealous opposition and began the movement eventually known as “puritanism.”

The “godly,” as these Protestants called themselves, wanted to “purify” the church from “men’s inventions,” rooting out and extirpating everything they considered unbiblical, unsanctified, and untrue. Puritans hoped to rid the Church of England of its bishops and establish either an overseeing government of elders (Presbyterianism) or a series of independent congregations whose authority was contained to the local gathering (Congregationalism, also called Independency). Thus, puritanism involved many controversies over ecclesiastical polity: the form, function, hierarchy, authority, and structure of the Church of England.¹¹

The degree of disappointment, anger, distancing, or compromise with the Church of England could vary enormously from one puritan to the next. Those who abandoned the Church of England altogether were called Separatists. The “Pilgrims” were of this variety. They had it worse, since rejecting the Church of England could be considered an act of treason. Fleeing to Holland first and then to America in 1620, they were a small group, mostly poor, and they landed in a place (Plymouth) where they had no English patent or charter. William Bradford became their leader, and his account of that experience, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (written 1630–1651), has since become the most famous and influential piece of Pilgrim writing. The nonseparatist puritans, meanwhile, arrived in America in 1628 (Salem) and 1630 (Boston) with a large entourage, a decent amount of wealth, a stated intention of remaining in the Church of England, and a handy charter establishing their English right to rule the colony of Massachusetts Bay. John Winthrop was the first governor, and his 1630 “city on a hill” sermon, called *A Model of Christian Charity*, is arguably now the most famous and influential American puritan text that survives.

The puritans who established churches in New England were almost wholly committed to the Congregationalist form of puritanism. They did not migrate to New England with this system fully sketched out, but it developed over time until codified by the Cambridge Platform in 1648. Each church would be independent, though they would remain united by the “right hand of fellowship,” and the state would protect true religion by

¹¹ For the best book on this puritan desire to return to the “primitive” structure of the early church, getting rid of the “inventions” that had accumulated in the meanwhile, see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

nourishing the conditions in which it could flourish. New England puritans thus envisioned separate tasks for both church and state, so much so that a minister could not be elected a magistrate. Yet they also hoped and expected that the church and state would work hand in hand, so that magistrates, for example, had to be confirmed members of a church. In a sense, New England puritans saw the church and state as mutually supportive separate spheres, for the Congregationalism they envisioned required the active protection of the government. It was a system England would never adopt.

In England, instead, events took a very different turn. Civil war broke out in 1642, with a largely puritan Parliament opposing the largely anti-puritan army of King Charles I (1625–1649). Many causes went into the making of this war, and endless books have attempted to explain it. But when the fighting began, it was clear where New England puritans stood: they invested their hopes in the battle against the king – and many even migrated back to fight for the reformation. When Oliver Cromwell, at the head of the New Model Army, defeated King Charles, however, the hoped-for reformation did not materialize. As the new Lord Protector of England, Cromwell failed to do precisely what New England puritans thought the state ought to do: protect true religion from heretics and establish the proper society for the flourishing of the church. Instead, Cromwell instituted a much broader range of religious toleration than had come before, and he refused to remake the Church of England in the guise of New England Congregationalism. Through the course of the war and its aftermath, New England puritans gradually separated further and further from the culture of puritanism in England.

Ecclesiastical politics explains a great deal of puritanism, then, but certainly not all. Beyond such politics, puritanism can be considered a social movement among the religiously likeminded. Puritans frequently sought each other out for mutual support, encouragement, and growth. Often to the consternation and criticism of their family, friends, foes, neighbors, and countrymen, puritans separated themselves from others through a variety of pious practices. Physically, they gathered in small groups and conferences (called conventicles) for study and prayer, attended the same schools together (especially Emmanuel College at Cambridge) for ministerial training, and, while in England, traveled long distances to the same “godly” sermons as a group (called “sermon gadding”). Mentally, puritans in England could often see themselves as a persecuted minority suffering together in the midst of an ungodly culture, and in New England as a body of Christ obligated to “cure” or to expel the sinful from its midst.

Occasionally, as with the Pilgrim Separatists, puritans distinguished themselves through outright declaration, rejecting the Church of England entirely and attempting to set up a separate church on their own. In this sense, puritanism can be understood as a movement of the bonded godly, a people tied together emotionally by practices that built friendships, affection, and a strong sense of shared experience.

That movement of the bonded godly produced a great deal of literature. In their intense pursuit of grace, puritans turned to a variety of literary practices. They wrote and studied history to see God's hand at work in the unfolding of his grand designs, trying to draw lessons from history while also setting themselves apart from others so as to establish lines of mercy and judgment, salvation and condemnation, punishment and redemption – the meaning, messages, and providence of God. They observed nature closely and described in intricate detail the beauties and harmonies they encountered there, in part because they believed that all of creation reflected the glory of its Creator. They carefully examined their own lives – their afflictions, prosperities, behaviors, and emotions – in order to determine from moment to moment where they stood in relation to God. And they filled their lives with sermons – multiple sermons each week, each sermon more than an hour long – in hopes that a minister might be able to deliver the word of God directly to their hopeful hearts. In all of these attempts to perceive God and their relation to him – in all their histories, poetry, spiritual autobiographies, sermons, and other writings – they were guided by the Bible, the one sure place where God had revealed himself to all. In that sense, a literary history of puritanism is a history of their practices and perceptions of grace – including all the worries and fears about where and when God's grace *failed* to appear.

As a way of life focused on grace, puritanism could be extraordinarily broad, encompassing everyone from radical Separatists to moderate, conforming Calvinists (those who muted their disagreements with the Church of England and “conformed” to the practices demanded). In addition, the theological variety could be quite vast. Radical spiritists, emphasizing the freedom of the grace of God, might focus their attention on *justification* – the moment when God declares a sinner righteous – arguing that a rapturous experience of God's loving forgiveness and election could grant a full assurance of salvation. Once saved, always saved – and once a person knew their status, they could know it for the rest of their life. According to the most radical of these radical spiritists, a single experience could free a person from all future worry, so that nothing – including all the sins still to come – could ever unsave someone or threaten their assurance of salvation.

On the other end of the spectrum, many puritans stressed the necessity of *sanctification*, the good life of proper affection and obedience lived out of gratitude to God after justification had come. These puritans (who constituted the majority) deemphasized the experience of justification; in fact, many of them argued that justification could occur unnoticed. There was never a singular moment of conversion: people could not point to a specific time when they were saved. Instead, the assurance of salvation came gradually, in fits and starts, with doubts and anxiety and periods of refreshment and joy, in a long and unending process of conversion – each of the saved slowly accumulating evidence of grace over the course of their entire life.

What this one example illustrates is the breadth of possibility even within widely shared sets of belief. Between the radical spiritists and their opponents, the basic theological structure (requiring both justification and sanctification) could be virtually identical, but the practices and communities that came from different emphases could alter radically – so much so that one camp might brutally oppose the other. No clear “orthodoxy” of puritanism emerged in the seventeenth century. Instead, puritanism composed a range of rituals, practices, and possible beliefs – sometimes mutually permitted, debated, and embraced in consultation and friendship, sometimes mutually opposed, disputed, and persecuted in competition and animosity. For that reason, most scholars no longer capitalize the “P” of puritanism, trying to suggest with a lowercase letter that the many different people we today call “puritan” would not necessarily have seen themselves as allied comrades in a common cause.

Indeed, while New England puritans found agreement far more often than their peers across the sea, they nonetheless experienced a great deal of dissent through the seventeenth century. The Antinomian Controversy (1636–1638) pitted different versions of grace and assurance against each other, nearly splitting the Massachusetts Bay Colony in two and ending in the trial and banishment of Anne Hutchinson. Quakers took radical spiritism to an even further extent, preaching an inner light that puritan magistrates roundly rejected. Banishments again ensued, and when four Quakers refused to stay out of Massachusetts Bay, they were hanged. Those who rejected infant baptism posed another problem. Meanwhile, another concern arose from those who wanted to baptize their infants but who had never officially become members in a church through a profession of faith. Puritan ministers watched as membership declined through the years, and in the 1660s they came up with a new solution: a divisive policy known as the Halfway Covenant, where baptized parents who had never

become full members in a church through a profession of faith (they were, in effect, “halfway” there with their own baptisms) could nonetheless baptize their own children. Many in New England accepted this compromise. Many rejected it. Churches split, and puritanism continued to splinter.

Beyond interior dissents and controversies, puritan settler-colonists also had to grapple with the fact of their invasion and settlement of Native America. To be sure, many of them described New England as a vacant space. They did not (or refused to) recognize Indigenous agricultural and husbandry practices, instead describing even inhabited spaces as wilderness. And of course, coastal Algonquians had suffered great losses from diseases introduced by Europeans. Puritan observers understood disease as a means that God had used to make a place for their plantation: “where there is a vacant place, there is liberty for the sonnes of *Adam* or *Noah* to come and inhabite, though they neither buy it, nor ask their leaves.”¹²

But the reality was that Algonquian people, though suffering the effects of European invasion, persisted in New England, and throughout the seventeenth century they were both a cultural and military force to be reckoned with. Puritan settlers often cited the “propagation of the gospel” as an aim of English colonization, both by the settlement of Christian communities and by converting Indigenous people to Protestantism. They understood evangelism as a spiritual good, but it was politically expedient as well. English colonies were hemmed in by, and competed with, successful Catholic enterprises – French colonies to the north, New Spain to the south. These European settlements presented serious challenges to English colonization, and internecine violence among various European colonies (including those of the Dutch) mirrored and intensified conflict among the home countries in Europe. Successful Native missions not only offered bragging rights; converts were also understood by European colonists as key military and intelligence assets.

Puritan evangelism, when compared with French and Spanish efforts, was a rather sorry affair. English colonists began evangelizing in earnest only in the 1640s and 1650s, and the “praying Indians” attracted to puritanism numbered in the hundreds, compared with the many thousands claimed by Catholics throughout North America. Nonetheless, the mission was important beyond mere numbers. A series of publications

¹² John Cotton, “Gods Promise to His Plantation (1630),” ed. Reiner Smolinski, *Electronic Texts in American Studies*, 22, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/22>, accessed July 15, 2019.

(the so-called Eliot tracts, named after the New England minister John Eliot, who led evangelism efforts) brought needed attention to the colonies during the middle of the century, attracting prayers and essential donations of goods and cash.¹³ These tracts also start to document conversions of African Americans, and such conversions shaped New England puritan literature, politics, and culture into the eighteenth century.

English colonial efforts to convert Algonquians and African Americans persisted throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, although the concerted mid-seventeenth-century effort largely came to an end with the outbreak of King Philip's War (1675–1676). That conflict, in which a coalition of Algonquian fighters, led by the Wampanoag sachem Metacom, was shaped by the presence of praying Indians on both sides. English settler-colonists used individual converts as spies and “praying town” settlements as frontier hedges against the enemy.¹⁴ Mission-educated and literate Algonquians were among Metacom's forces. They served as translators and scribes as well as warriors. During and after the war, divisions of English opinion came to the fore: praying Indians were held suspect, and puritan evangelism efforts among Native people were much diminished. Nevertheless, American puritan literature was influenced by non-English believers – whether we term them “puritan” or not – as well as by those who resisted Christianization.

Controversies, dissents, debates, and divisions thus marked New England puritanism from its first days to its end. But how and when did American puritanism end? Scholars pose different answers to such a question. Some turn to the minister, theologian, and philosopher Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) as the last, great representative of New England puritanism, marking the end of the movement with the outbreak of the Great Awakening. Evangelicalism closes American puritanism and opens something new. Others see puritanism ending with the Salem witch trials (1692). New England saw a rapid series of changes in the 1680s under King James II (1685–1688), who revoked the charter of Massachusetts Bay and imposed a new Anglican government in New England headed by the hated Edmund Andros. When William and Mary (1689–1702) overthrew James II during the Glorious Revolution, Massachusetts Bay rebelled

¹³ See Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 33–34.

¹⁴ For discussions of the role of praying Indians and praying towns in the war, see Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); and Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

against Andros and reinstalled the system they had before – though they no longer had a charter to authorize their government. The Salem witch trials broke out in the midst of these dramatic upheavals, and the coming of a new charter did not bring them to an immediate halt. Judges disregarded magistrates, magistrates disregarded ministers, and ministers foundered in the welter of widespread suffering, trying to shore up their authority with sweeping claims about the place of God's church in Satan's "wilderness." The end result was a loss of trust all around, greater religious toleration (imposed by William and Mary), and a diminished authority for puritan ministers. That moment, many scholars have claimed, marks the end of American puritanism. Calvinism continued, but the special relationship between church and state – the cooperation intended to nourish and protect true religion – had died.¹⁵ The contributors to this volume were not told where or when to focus their pieces. They were not given an end point. Tellingly, most authors limited themselves to the seventeenth century. Insofar as a key transitional figure appears in this volume, that figure is Cotton Mather, not Jonathan Edwards.

Regardless of when puritanism came to an end, its influence continued long afterward. Puritan literature remains an important feature of American literary traditions – one of the many cultures that created a vast and dynamic landscape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As our anthologies of American literature have broadened through the years – as our sense of "American literature" has widened both in terms of whom it includes and what kind of writing it contains – the puritans have remained an important piece of the greater whole. But they are not what we once thought them to be. Their literature does not look forward to an exceptional nation but rather grapples with a multitude of cultures in their midst, all of them informing how the puritans thought, what they had to write, and the form in which they wrote it. Devotion defined so much of puritanism, but it never came divorced from historical circumstances and cross-cultural contexts. For the last three decades, scholars have embraced these broader contexts and used them to reread puritan literature. Bringing their findings and methods together, combining places and approaches, this book invites scholars, teachers, and students to revisit the history of American puritan literature.

¹⁵ For the best argument that the Salem witch trials resulted not from the power of puritanism but from the fact that it had already collapsed, see Michael Winship, *Hot Protestants*, chapter 23: "A Godly Massacre of the Innocents in Post-Puritan Massachusetts."

Prologue
Pilgrims, Puritans, and the Origins of America

Abram Van Engen

On January 11, 1989, President Ronald Reagan came before the American people to say farewell. It was his final televised speech to the nation, and he used the address to clarify the vision that had guided his entire political career: “I have spoken of the city on a hill all my life,” he said, “but I don’t know if I ever communicated what I saw when I said it.” For one last time before the American people, he sketched his image of “a tall, proud city” rising from the puritan past, then signed off and said goodbye. But the “city on a hill” did not go with him. Instead, it has become a signature element in American nationalism and the unofficial motto of American exceptionalism – the idea that America has been set apart by God (or by the forces of history) with a unique story and a special mission to lead and serve the world. America has been called a “city on a hill” so often across the political spectrum that it might seem like it has always been this way. That is what the usual story would have us believe. According to Reagan – and to many other pundits and politicians – when John Winthrop, the first puritan governor of Massachusetts Bay, declared that “we shall be as a city upon a hill,” he defined the identity and purpose of America ever since. What most people do not know is that John Winthrop’s 1630 sermon went unnoticed, unpublished, and unmentioned for more than 200 years. It was found in 1838, and it became famous only during the Cold War. Since the 1970s, scholars and politicians have often considered this text fundamental to the meaning of America. Yet for most of American history, it went unknown.¹

The fortunes of Winthrop’s sermon enable us to glimpse how American origin stories work – and why they have so often focused on the puritans.

¹ Ronald Reagan, “Farewell Address to the Nation,” January 11, 1989, American Presidency Project, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/farewell-address-the-nation, accessed July 10, 2019. All Reagan quotes throughout this chapter are from the same source. For a fuller account of the details in this chapter, see Abram Van Engen, *City on a Hill: A History of American Exceptionalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

Ask people where and when “America” begins and many different answers will emerge: Native Americans from time immemorial; Christopher Columbus (1492); Jamestown, Captain Smith, and Pocahontas (1607); Plymouth Rock and Pilgrim Landing (1620); the Declaration of Independence (1776); the American Revolution (1783); or the US Constitution (1789). Each of these answers shapes a definition of “America” – how old and big and varied it must be, along with what counts as its most fundamental components. Is “America” a wide swath of territory running from the Bering Strait to the tip of Argentina, including all the people who have ever lived on that land? Or is it a modern nation, beginning sometime in the late eighteenth century, founded primarily through a combination of British colonies and defined by a shifting set of political boundaries? In between those answers, we have different possible origins, including the Vikings, Columbus, Spanish conquistadors, Dutch merchants, French fur traders, and many others, such as the English settler-colonialists at Jamestown and Plymouth.

But of all these possible answers and origin stories, one is particularly curious. There is no obvious reason why Americans should turn to the Pilgrims. They were not the first people here, nor the first Europeans, nor the first English settlers, nor did they establish the oldest inhabited town in the current United States, nor did they begin a new nation. In most ways of counting origins, they make no sense. Yet the story of the *Mayflower* and the landing of the Pilgrims has become one of the most legendary tales in American history. Why? What work does this story do in the remembering and remaking of “America”?

The story of the Pilgrims has everything to do with American exceptionalism. Their tale defines a people called out and separated from the corruptions and abuses of Europe, establishing a new experiment in freedom on a distant shore. That is how the narrative passes down, and that is why it continues to animate the speeches of modern politicians. Consider the way Reagan used this story in his “Farewell Address to the Nation.” After calling America a “shining city upon a hill,” he explained that the words come from John Winthrop, “an early Pilgrim, an early freedom man.” To be a Pilgrim, for Reagan, meant to stand for liberty. Winthrop came here “looking for a home that would be free,” and from his first step ashore, Reagan asserted, we have set before ourselves the cause of liberty. As Reagan put it, America is “still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home.” The story of the Pilgrims – at least as they came to be remembered and revered – paints America as a

high-minded place, set apart from all others, standing for freedom in a broken world.

These memories matter. Stories of the past bind citizens together and guide the policies and positioning of the nation. Narratives of national history define what it means to be “American.”² In an influential lecture called “What Is a Nation?” delivered in the late 1800s, the French philosopher Ernst Renan reflected on this function of collective memory. He rejected competing definitions of the “nation” that others offered at the time and explained instead that a nation was not a race, a language, a religion, a community of interest, or a geographically bounded territory, but rather “a soul, a spiritual principle.” To that end, what makes a nation work is the collective memory of its people. Each nation is, in effect, an “imagined community,” and the imagination that makes a nation, Renan claimed, consists primarily of memories rehearsed and relived.³

Reagan would have agreed. In that 1989 Farewell Address, as if having just read Renan, he called all Americans to remember their history and warned of what might happen if they did not. “If we forget what we did,” he proclaimed, “we won’t know who we are. I’m warning of an eradication of the American memory that could result, ultimately, in an erosion of the American spirit.” What was needed, he argued, was a study of the past. “Let’s start with some basics,” he advised: “more attention to American history and a greater emphasis on civic ritual.” In particular, Reagan called on all Americans to learn “why the Pilgrims came here.”⁴

Ernst Renan and Ronald Reagan, then, might have agreed about the importance of collective memory. They may even have agreed that a nation is primarily “a soul, a spiritual principle,” since Reagan worried that a loss of memory would lead to “an erosion of the American spirit.” Beyond such agreements, however, they would soon have parted ways.

² Recently, the historian Jill Lepore has called for new national narratives, claiming that too often historians have abandoned the attempt to tell a unifying national story: “When historians abandon the study of the nation, when scholars stop trying to write a common history for a people,” she argues, “nationalism doesn’t die. Instead, it eats liberalism.” Basically, she claims, national narratives will exist whether scholars like it or not; such narratives can be created either by those trying to account for the evidence of history and its many different peoples or by those who feel no such constraints. See Jill Lepore, “A New Americanism: Why a Nation Needs a National Story,” *Foreign Affairs* (March–April 2019), www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-02-05/new-americanism-nationalism-jill-lepore, accessed June 28, 2019.

³ Ernst Renan, “What Is a Nation?,” trans. Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 8–22 (10). See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

⁴ Reagan actually gave two examples of history all Americans should know: (1) “why the Pilgrims came here” and (2) “who Jimmy Doolittle was, and what those 30 seconds over Tokyo meant.”

For Renan emphasized that the memories a nation creates and rehearses are always partial, always selective representations of the past that serve a particular purpose in the present. Collective memory often leaves out whatever threatens the “spiritual principle.” Accordingly, Renan explained that it was not just remembering but, in fact, “forgetting” that formed “an essential factor in the creation of a nation.” Actual historical work would involve remembering what has been forgotten; it would bring to light what had long lain hidden. Renan was neither advancing nor criticizing the nationalism based in collective memory, but simply pointing out that a nation’s most cherished historical stories might have very little to do with history. In fact, Renan concluded, “the progress of historical studies often poses a threat to nationality.”⁵

With Renan, then, we can ask what kinds of “forgetting” are registered in Reagan’s remembrance of John Winthrop and his 1630 declaration that “we shall be as a city upon a hill.” For one thing, we can see that the difference between the Pilgrims of the 1620 *Mayflower* voyage and the puritans who came later has disappeared. As we commonly use such terms (see the Introduction to this book), Winthrop was no “early Pilgrim man” at all. Further, the history of Winthrop’s sermon has been erased. When John Winthrop used the phrase “city upon a hill” (Reagan added the word “shining”) none of his fellow puritans seemed to notice or care. That is, if his sermon represents the original vision of America, the English settlers who first heard it never thought so.

But more important than these elisions is the broader history of early America that gets narrowed down to one particular people at one particular time. Not only does a focus on Pilgrims and puritans take history and memory away from all the others who lived in early America – the Indigenous, the Spanish, the Dutch, the French, and others – it also sidelines these cultures as inessential to the true history of America. The first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619 – one year before the *Mayflower* sailed. As W. E. B. Du Bois reminded Americans in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), “Before the Pilgrims landed we were here.”⁶ The history of slavery in America predates Pilgrim Landing, yet that American story – along with many others – gets downplayed and dismissed when the Pilgrims become the point of origin that matters most.

⁵ Renan, “What Is a Nation?,” 3.

⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. David Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Bedford, 1997), 94.

Even in positioning freedom-loving Pilgrims against a slave society further south, however, another deep forgetting surfaces. How many Americans know that the puritans themselves had slaves? Several puritan households had their own enslaved persons of color, sometimes African, sometimes Indigenous. New England was embedded in the Atlantic slave system, not just because enslaved persons lived with them, but even more so because many of its merchants made their living from slave ships passing between Africa, the Caribbean, and New England. American history – in textbooks, novels, poetry, and political speeches – has often erased slavery from New England in order to have an origin devoted to something better, something nobler, something pure. As the influential poet Felicia Hemans once put it (in lines that would be set to music and frequently reprinted), at the landing of the Pilgrims “the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang / To the anthem of the free.”⁷

On the four-hundredth anniversary of the *Mayflower*, we need to step back and ask how the influential “puritan origins” story was made, who made it, and what purposes it has served. As Hemans’s poem makes clear, the collective memory of American puritan origins was not created by Reagan alone. In many ways, he voiced a tradition that had been 150 years in the making. Since the early days of the new nation, Americans had turned to the Pilgrims to define themselves, and by the time of the Cold War, the landing of the Pilgrims and the idea of puritan origins had achieved a prominence hard to question. It was a wave that first began rising at the anniversary celebration of the Pilgrims in 1820 and continued to build most of the way through the twentieth century. When that wave finally broke in the 1990s, the puritan settlers of early New England began to look much different from how they had before. They became, in many ways, far less exceptional and, at the same time, far more interesting and complex than any origins story would have them be. This prologue attempts to explain how the wave of works on puritan origins first rose and peaked; the rest of this book pulls together the knowledge scholars have gained since it curled and crashed.

⁷ Felicia Hemans, “The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England,” in *Records of Woman: With Other Poems*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1828), 265. For a recent account of slavery and New England, see Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Norton, 2016). See Kristina Bross’s chapter on the Caribbean (Chapter 5) in this volume.

Commemorating the Pilgrims

For the first few decades of the new nation, the Pilgrims remained a rather local affair. In 1620, they had established a foundering English colony that soon disappeared. It would not seem like much to celebrate. But then, in 1820, on the bicentennial of Pilgrim Landing, celebrations began in earnest. These festivities served as a way to satisfy New Englanders that they had a significant role to play in a nation where the majority of the population and the bulk of the money lay elsewhere. Four out of the first five presidents came from Virginia. The South held the economic might of the nation, while New York had become a commercial hub. What did New England have to offer? The most prominent spokesperson from the region, a New Hampshire lawyer and politician named Daniel Webster, had once considered abandoning the region for a more influential platform, telling his brother that “our New England prosperity and importance are passing away . . . If any great scenes are to be acted in this country within the next twenty years New York is the place in which those scenes are to be viewed.”⁸ But Webster finally turned back to his roots and embraced New England. And in 1820, it was Daniel Webster’s particular form of embrace that started to make the Pilgrim story grow.

Called on to give the main speech at the bicentennial celebration of the Pilgrims, Webster used his two hours to lay the foundation of America at the feet of those English settlers who, supposedly, first trod on Plymouth Rock. Here in Plymouth, he declared, could be found “the first footsteps of civilized man!” That claim echoed through Webster’s address, where he emphasized the Pilgrims as the point of origin, the “commencement” of a “new society.”⁹ In order to establish such a story, Webster contrasted the

⁸ Quoted in Frederic Austin, *Daniel Webster* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs, 1914), 110. Many scholars agree that Webster’s speeches of the 1820s were integral to making Pilgrim Landing and Plymouth Rock into a national origin myth. As Joseph Conforti summarizes, “The founding of Plymouth itself remained an uncommemorated, even obscure, local event overshadowed for most of the colonial era by the ‘Great,’ expansive Puritan migration to New England.” In *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 171. Webster would change that. For a summary of Webster’s influence, see Harlow W. Sheidley, *Sectional Nationalism: Massachusetts Conservative Leaders and the Transformation of America, 1815–1836* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), ch. 5. See also Paul D. Erickson, “Daniel Webster’s Myth of the Pilgrims,” *New England Quarterly* 57.1 (1984): 44–64; and John Seelye, *Memory’s Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 73–85. Seelye’s book offers a comprehensive account of the making of the Pilgrims in American memory from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth.

⁹ Daniel Webster, *A Discourse, Delivered at Plymouth, December 22, 1820, in Commemoration of the First Settlement of New-England* (Boston, 1821), 5, 16.

Pilgrims with “Grecian emigrations,” “Roman colonization,” “the Asiatic establishments of the modern European nations,” “the European settlements in the West India Islands,” and any other plantation or settlement – including, of course, Virginia. What made the Pilgrims unique, Webster argued, was the motive that guided their course. Where others had come for profit, the Pilgrims – and *only* the Pilgrims – came for civil and religious freedom. According to Webster, they established a republican form of government and the liberty of conscience, and Americans ever since have been called on to maintain and preserve what the Pilgrims first began.¹⁰

Webster traced the influence of the Pilgrims not only forward but outward. New England mattered to the nation because its people established the principles defended at Lexington and Concord, and those people had since spread across the plains. New England “overflowed” its boundaries, Webster proclaimed, and “the waves of emigration have pressed farther and farther toward the West.” Webster closed his speech by imagining the “voice of acclamation and gratitude, commencing on the Rock of Plymouth . . . transmitted through millions of the sons of the Pilgrims, till it lose itself in the murmurs of the Pacific seas.” He rooted an expansive and expanding nation in Plymouth Rock.¹¹

That story proliferated through histories and textbooks in the new nation, sustained by a new interest in history that began swelling in the 1820s. A series of bicentennials kept the spirit strong: Pilgrim Landing in 1820, the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1825, and then the Declaration of Independence, marked on its fiftieth anniversary, July 4, 1826, by the deaths of both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. In the spirit of the age, Americans began consuming historical novels, odes, and textbooks, intended not just for schools but for families – all of it providing the people of a new nation with a much longer past and setting the terms for collective remembering to commence.

In this large, new market for history, plenty of narratives competed for attention, each with its own version of America. Many emphasized the importance of the Pilgrims, but none had as much impact as George Bancroft’s *History of the United States*. Bancroft was a politician and statesman who devoted his time to chronicling the rise of America in ten

¹⁰ For these quotes and more on just how “widely different” Webster considered the Pilgrims, see Webster, *First Settlement of New-England*, 18–25. On the need to preserve and transmit the heritage of the Pilgrims, see *ibid.*, 8, 50.

¹¹ Webster, *First Settlement of New-England*, 34, 55.

volumes written and revised over four decades of his career. The first volume, published in 1834, established the tone. In the United States, Bancroft explained, the providential hand of God could be seen unveiling a nation designed to spread civil and religious liberty across the globe. And that hand appeared clearest and most forcefully in the flight of the Pilgrims to American shores.

For Bancroft, those 102 Mayflower passengers embodied all that would lead to the rise of the United States. "As the Pilgrims landed," Bancroft boldly declared, "their institutions were already perfected. Democratic liberty and independent Christian worship at once existed in America."¹² Summarizing all the Pilgrims had done, Bancroft explained that these early English settlers of New England had created the conditions in which America's future would be formed. "Through scenes of misery and gloom," he declared, "the Pilgrims showed the way to an asylum for those, who would go to the wilderness for the purity of religion or the liberty of conscience. They set an example of colonizing New-England, and formed the mold for the civil and religious character of its institutions." Americans, therefore, must "cherish the memory" of the Pilgrims because it was they "who founded a state on the basis of democratic liberty; the fathers of the country; the men, who, as they first trod the soil of the New World, scattered the seminal principles of republican freedom and national independence."¹³ It is not hard to leap from this rhetoric in 1834 to Ronald Reagan's Farewell Address in 1989.

Yet unlike Reagan, Bancroft did not confuse or conflate "Pilgrim" and "Puritan." He did not call Winthrop "a Pilgrim man" or try to associate him with the *Mayflower*; and, at least in 1834, he did not cite John Winthrop's "city on a hill" sermon or try to associate that phrase with America. The sermon, after all, had not yet been found. It still lay unknown and unpublished in the New-York Historical Society archives. Finding that sermon and making it famous would involve more shifts in the memory of America's origins that would help solidify the story of exceptionalism already taking shape in the hands of Webster, Bancroft, and others.

In 1920, that story reached unparalleled heights of popular appeal – though the myth of puritan origins would not finally crash for another seven decades. At the three-hundredth anniversary of Pilgrim Landing, presidents and vice presidents and presidential hopefuls all showed up in Plymouth to laud the Pilgrims as the origin of the entire United States.

¹² Bancroft, *History*, 338.

¹³ Bancroft, *History*, 349–350.

The governor of Massachusetts, Calvin Coolidge – a man who would soon become vice president and then president of the United States – claimed that the coming of the Pilgrims held world-historical consequences, for this little band of believers were “destined to free mankind.”¹⁴ The old historian and senator Henry Cabot Lodge followed Coolidge’s speech by explaining that the Pilgrims had not come to America for material gain; they came instead for nobler purposes, for self-government and freedom of thought. Such principles had been embedded in the nation by the Pilgrim settlers, and so long as Americans remembered them and stayed true to them, their nation would continue to rise.¹⁵

The power of these speeches and beliefs can best be seen in the last event to commemorate Pilgrim Landing. In the final hot days of August 1921, a spectacular pageant praised all that the Pilgrims had supposedly brought about.¹⁶ It played nightly for two weeks and was witnessed by 100,000 on the final night, including President Warren G. Harding and Vice President Calvin Coolidge. The pageant’s underlying theme was “the struggle of the Pilgrims and their forbears for religious toleration and individual liberty,” and it emphasized that “individual liberty under wise and tolerant laws” was “their gift to posterity.”¹⁷ Here was the language of American origins at its most explicit. What so many Americans tended to prize about their nation – this language of civil and religious freedom – could be traced back to their beginnings through a story in which the coming of the Pilgrims led inevitably, *providentially*, to the rise of liberty. Celebrated by presidents and politicians, praised in elaborate pageants, memorialized in new stone carvings and plaques, venerated with a freshly built hall, the Pilgrims stood for the very foundations of American greatness, and they extended that greatness as a torch-bearing beacon of toleration, liberty, law, morality, and education to the entire watching world.

¹⁴ *Exercises on the Three Hundredth Anniversary of the Landing of the Pilgrims: Held at Plymouth, Massachusetts, Tuesday, December 21, 1920*, 17–18, box L-1920, Pilgrim Tercentenary Commission Records, 1912–1919, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

¹⁵ Henry Cabot Lodge, *The Pilgrims of Plymouth: An Address at Plymouth, Massachusetts, on the Three Hundredth Anniversary of Their Landing, December 21, 1920* (Boston: Pilgrim Tercentenary Commission, 1921).

¹⁶ Since winter is no time to hold such a pageant in Massachusetts, the planners had postponed the tribute to the following summer.

¹⁷ *Report of the Pilgrim Tercentenary Commission* (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1917), 6, 26, box 1917, Pilgrim Tercentenary Commission Records, 1912–1919, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

Creating the Puritans

Before we can understand what has changed about Pilgrim and puritan origin stories a century later, however, we have to see how and why scholars shifted attention from these overly feted *Mayflower* voyagers to their relatively less admired northern neighbors, the puritans. While the Pilgrims commanded an audience of presidents and politicians, the puritans had far less appeal. Still today, we recognize a common split in American collective memory about these two sets of people, even as they are often blended together as one common origin. “Pilgrim” is a term associated mostly with positive connotations in Anglo-American culture: noble, brave, daring, determined, devout. “Puritan,” however, brings up far different associations: scary, angry, pleasure-hating, dogmatic, oppressive. Television shows, movies, and popular novels often present the puritans not as the bringers of freedom but as the original force of repression against which brave souls once fought for the liberties we now enjoy.¹⁸

Such a tradition began in earnest in the late nineteenth century. During the height of the Victorian era, historians and cultural critics began to see the puritans as moralists who hated any and every good thing worth having. One of the famous Adams family, a grandson of John Quincy Adams named Brooks, brought prominence to this position in his book *The Emancipation of Massachusetts* (1887). In his account of New England puritanism, Adams argued that the puritans had brought all the wrong sorts of English repression with them to America. They represented the same forces of religious intolerance that could be found wherever clergy exercised too much power – from Catholic Rome to Calvin’s Geneva to the courts of Boston. Only by escaping from the clutches of the church – only by *emancipating* Massachusetts, he argued – could America begin to stand as a model of freedom for all the world.

While Brooks Adams attacked the idea of religious intolerance, others took aim at the supposed puritan influence on American art. Van Wyck Brooks, a widely read literary critic at the turn of the century, explained that the utter lack of any solid fine arts tradition in America (a common assumption of the time) arose entirely from America’s puritan foundation. Because the puritans had focused so much on religion and survival, because they had emphasized severe virtues of industry and frugality,

¹⁸ Consider, for example, how often puritan-style clothes get used to signal to audiences that we have entered a repressive religious society (e.g., *The Handmaid’s Tale*).

literary and visual arts had never been able to flourish in the country they created. According to Brooks, even when survival was no longer pressing, puritan virtues of industry and frugality remained dominant, choking out the possibility of a real artistic tradition.¹⁹

Still others began to see in puritan origins a grander influence on American culture. Max Weber, a German social theorist foundational to multiple scholarly fields, believed, like Van Wyck Brooks, that the puritans were all work and no play. But he extended that argument in a different direction. According to Weber, Calvinists transformed their work ethic into a sign of the soul's eternal state, and in the process they laid the groundwork for the rise of capitalism. Puritans *spiritualized* work, he argued, and their view of work's intrinsic value persisted long after the puritans' particular piety had died out. According to Weber, anyone caught in the structures of capitalism – regardless of what they actually believed about God or eternal life – would work as though their efforts could prove their worth. In a crude form of his argument that began circulating in the twentieth century, the Weber thesis was reduced to a simple formula: Calvinism gave us capitalism, and now no one can escape it.²⁰

Still others blamed the puritans more generally for anything and everything they disliked about America. H. L. Mencken, a contemporary of Max Weber and Van Wyck Brooks, defined puritanism as “the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.” According to his many columns and essays in *The Baltimore Sun* and *The American Mercury* from the 1910s through the 1930s, America was still paying the price of their pleasure-hating attitude with a repressive, moralistic, prohibitionist culture. Twentieth-century America, Mencken argued, had its roots in a misguided puritan past.

As these cases make clear, even when influential writers and thinkers opposed the puritans rather than celebrating them, they still saw no way around one fundamental proposition: that the puritans were the origin of America. Whether these writers started aboard the *Mayflower* with William Bradford in 1620 or the *Arbella* with John Winthrop in 1630, whether they located the beginning of America in Plymouth or Boston, they still

¹⁹ See Van Wyck Brooks, *The Wine of the Puritans* (London: Sisley's, 1908), and Van Wyck Brooks, *America's Coming-of-Age* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1915). For more on Van Wyck Brooks and his influence, see Randall Fuller, *Emerson's Ghosts: Literature, Politics, and the Making of Americanists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 3.

²⁰ See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*, ed. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Penguin, 2002).

saw that origin as exercising an enormous influence on American art, politics, business, and culture. For good or for ill, the puritans were at the root of it all.

Perry Miller, a Harvard English professor in the mid-twentieth century, would take all these stories and transform them into a new version of puritan origins that would wind its way through scholarly halls and out into the public for over fifty years. For Miller (1905–1963), everyone had these puritans partly right and mostly wrong. The part they had right concerned the puritans' influence on American culture. While acknowledging that many traditions have contributed to American culture, Miller also frequently erased them, claiming that Puritanism's "role in American thought has been almost the dominant one, for the descendants of Puritans have carried at least some habits of the Puritan mind into a variety of pursuits, have spread across the country, and in many fields of activity have played a leading part." According to Miller, "Without some understanding of Puritanism, it may safely be said, there is no understanding of America." Again and again, Miller claimed that the meaning of America could not be discovered apart from a study of the puritans.²¹

But what Miller changed about the puritans was the nature of that influence. He claimed that the puritans were not a backward, anti-pleasure, business-first, religiously repressive set of holy terrors. Instead, he said, they were smart. They constituted an intellectual culture with a vast, complex theology rooted in deep learning and leading not only to an incredibly literate population but also to a system of schools – including Harvard – that still flourished in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, despite what Miller identified as the nation's long-standing nonpuritan, anti-intellectual streak. Even more importantly, Miller argued, the puritans used their great learning to set a driving purpose before the people: they would reform the Church of England. They would remake religion in its purest form, and they would model it for all to see. According to Miller, these puritans perceived themselves as a chosen people selected to be the

²¹ Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings* (Mineola: Dover, 2001 [1938]), 1. Based on the way Miller explains who wrote what in this book, it is clear that this account of the puritans is his own. As Avihu Zakai nicely summarizes, "In Miller's view, Puritanism was not merely a historical phenomenon of seventeenth-century New England, but rather a fundamental component underlying the entire American past from its beginning until his own time." Zakai, "'Epiphany at Matadi': Perry Miller's *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts* and the Meaning of American History," *Reviews in American History* 13.4 (1985): 628. For an account of the "Puritan origins" school in American literary history, which Miller adopted and expanded, see Russell Reising, *The Unusable Past: Theory and the Study of American Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1986).

vanguard of a unique mission and sent on an “errand into the wilderness.”²² And it was the possession of that errand, the fact of a consciously articulated purpose, which had most influenced American culture. For according to Miller, Americans have always been uniquely driven by a collective sense of purpose.

Such a grand vision of America, rooted supposedly in the puritans, is what finally enabled the rise of John Winthrop’s “city on a hill” sermon, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, once it was finally taken up by Perry Miller. It was this text, Miller said, which set the terms of the enterprise and established the origins of America. “Chronologically speaking,” Miller admitted, “Smith and a few others in Virginia, two or three at Plymouth, published works on America before the ‘Modell,’ but in relation to the principal theme of the American mind, the necessity laid upon it for decision, Winthrop stands at the beginning of our consciousness.”²³ In this one text – delivered on the eve of Winthrop’s arrival – could be found stated the purpose that started it all. Here, then, lay America’s beginnings.

So committed was Miller to this particular articulation of American purpose that he even began to make up facts about Winthrop’s sermon. By 1954, he was claiming that the sermon had been “printed,” though it never was. One year later he explained that it “was sent back to London for printing, and was reimported to Massachusetts Bay, so that all might heed.”²⁴ No such thing occurred. In fact, hardly a soul recorded the sermon or paid attention to it at all. The “city on a hill” phrase – coming originally from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:14 – most often applied to the church, not the nation. American exceptionalism had other phrases and terms that certainly did appear and spread from the American Revolution forward, but “city on a hill” represents a rather recent addition to the vocabulary. Still, in the midst of the Cold War, Perry Miller found the worldwide mission statement of the twentieth-century United States in a forgotten sermon of the seventeenth century.

²² Miller’s most famous book borrowed this phrase from a puritan sermon as its title. See Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1984 [1956]).

²³ Perry Miller, “Shaping of the American Character,” *New England Quarterly* 28.4 (1955): 443. Elsewhere Miller claimed that he did not really intend to elevate New England above the rest of America or to denigrate or dismiss Virginia, Maryland, or the Dutch, but that is simply how the texts played out: “because under the peculiar conditions of the settlement, the issues were in that region made more articulate – the dedication to a specific ecclesiastical program required the leaders more to expound their conception – than elsewhere.” Miller, “Equality in the American Setting,” in *The Responsibility of Mind in a Civilization of Machines*, ed. John Crowell and Stanford J. Searl, Jr. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), 144.

²⁴ Perry Miller, “The Social Context of the Covenant,” in *The Responsibility of Mind in a Civilization of Machines*, 137; Miller, “Equality in the American Setting,” 145.

From there, the story grew. Sacvan Bercovitch, the next great Harvard scholar to take up the puritans, magnified their influence. His most well-known books, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (1975) and *The American Jeremiad* (1978), focused on explaining Americans' sense of themselves through their rhetoric.²⁵ For Miller, the puritans began "the life of the mind in America" (the title of his last, unfinished work), but for Bercovitch the puritans originated the distinctive language of Americans. Alone among peoples of the earth, Bercovitch asserted, Americans not only set themselves apart with a divine mission; they also perceive all successes and failures as confirmation of their divinely chosen status – for setbacks are but the Lord's chastisements of his chosen ones, and prosperity is the sign of his blessing. In keeping with this rhetoric, Bercovitch argued, Americans separate what they do from who they are. Whatever Americans perceive as wrong (even the wrong they do themselves), they consider, finally, *un-American*; and whatever they perceive as right or righteous, in turn, becomes part and parcel of the American way. According to Bercovitch, such a way of speaking came straight from the puritans.²⁶ For Bercovitch, a direct line led from John Winthrop to the Vietnam War, where the American sense of mission led to the massacre of innocent civilians and the miring of Americans in a faraway jungle for dubious ends and with no apparent point. Only by thinking of themselves as a "city on a hill" could Americans do such a thing. Rhetoric affects outcomes. And the rhetoric of a world-saving mission bestowed on God's chosen people – confirmed in successes and failures alike – flowed unbroken from seventeenth-century puritanism to twentieth-century politicians. To the end of his life, Bercovitch never backed down from this fundamental claim. "In any case," he wrote in 2011, "it was the Puritan vision that became the language of the dominant culture."²⁷

²⁵ Both have since been reissued with new introductions. See Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); and Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

²⁶ For a particularly clear enunciation of this position, see Gerald Graff, "On *The American Jeremiad*," *Common-Place* 14.4 (2014), www.common-place-archives.org/vol-14/no-04/graff/#.XRZkzJNKiu4, accessed June 28, 2019.

²⁷ Sacvan Bercovitch, "2011 Preface," in *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), xl. Bercovitch made this claim in multiple ways. "The New England Puritans gave America the status of visible sainthood," he announced early in his career. As a result, "The importance of their vision to subsequent American thought can hardly be overestimated." Sacvan Bercovitch, "Introduction," in *The American Puritan Imagination: Essays in Revaluation*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 12. In his first major monograph, he explained, "The New England Puritans swept away that crucial distinction [between sacred and secular history]. In their 'special commission,' they proclaimed, redemptive

Bercovitch would have had good reason for believing that the puritan vision had made Americans consider themselves as a “city upon a hill.” After all, that was the rhetoric Ronald Reagan self-consciously adopted in 1974 and then repeated throughout his presidency. Democrats also turned to Winthrop to ground their sense of American identity and purpose. In 1988, the Democratic nominee for president, Michael Dukakis, announced in his nomination speech that the American sense of community began with John Winthrop in *A Model of Christian Charity*.²⁸ Since then, countless politicians on both the right and the left have cited Winthrop’s sermon as foundational. What had happened in politics and academia beginning in the 1970s was an odd combination of claims about the puritan origins of America. For very different reasons – directed toward very different ends – scholars like Sacvan Bercovitch and politicians like Ronald Reagan together pronounced that whatever America was today, for good or for ill, it began the moment the first governor of Massachusetts Bay declared to his followers that “we shall be as a city upon a hill.” The wave of puritan origins that had been building since 1820 had reached its peak.

Puritan Origins Today

In 1989, a rising literary historian named Andrew Delbanco published his own addition to this tradition with *The Puritan Ordeal*. This elegant book constituted in many ways the scholarly swan song of the puritan origins thesis. Calling Winthrop’s sermon the “ur-text of American literature,” Delbanco traced a continuous lineage of puritan ideas and experiences through Melville into the modern day.²⁹ He argued that the puritans, as immigrants, gave America its special character; moreover, their various views on sin left the legacies that still defined the strengths and weaknesses of American society today. In his introduction, Delbanco described himself as sympathizing with work that focused on “the ideological origins

merged with secular history. With an arrogance that astounded their contemporaries, Protestants no less than others, they identified America as the new promised land, foretold in scripture, as preparatory to the Second Coming.” Bercovitch, “2011 Preface,” xiii.

²⁸ Michael Dukakis, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta,” July 21, 1988, the American Presidency Project, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216671, accessed July 10, 2019.

²⁹ Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 72.

of contemporary culture,” because it offered the potential of “nurturing self-knowledge.”³⁰ As Gordon Wood summarized in an extensive review, Delbanco made “a grasp of Puritanism . . . fundamental to an understanding of the meaning of America.”³¹ He was, in some ways, the last of a long line.

By the time Andrew Delbanco published *The Puritan Ordeal*, scholars had begun to feel rather uncomfortable with studies that traced American origins to the present day. “Positing in any literal sense that sort of direct transmission of Puritan values to later generations of Americans is not something modern historians find easy to do,” Wood remarked.³² Instead, scholars began rejecting a definition of the nation that traced its origin to puritan New England. Not only did they object to the exceptionalism such an approach implied; they also turned against scholarly work that treated the past as a set of stepping stones leading *inevitably* from some supposed point of origin to the present day. History is simply more complicated. Legacies, influences, and consequences come from many quarters. And *all* Americans – from Native Americans and African Americans to the Spanish, Dutch, French, English, and others – have contributed to the making of America. As a result, for the past thirty years, scholars have largely separated early America from the rise of the nation or the formation of the present day, instead exploring and revealing the plethora of lives, texts, and cultures that existed both within and beyond New England. This was the crash of the puritan origins thesis, which was loudly proclaimed in academe, though not always heard beyond its halls.³³

In the collapse of the origins thesis, the puritans have opened up before us in novel and unexpected ways. The old thesis that persisted from the time of Webster and Bancroft through Miller, Bercovitch, and Reagan had assumed, by and large, a mostly homogeneous set of people set apart in an isolated laboratory of experiences and experiments. For the puritans to lead from the seventeenth century to the present day, they had to be perceived en masse, presented as all more or less the same. We have since learned that there was far more happening in early puritanism and a great deal more

³⁰ Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, 3–4.

³¹ Gordon S. Wood, “Struggle over the Puritans,” *New York Review of Books* (November 9, 1989), www.nybooks.com/articles/1989/11/09/struggle-over-the-puritans/, accessed June 28, 2019.

³² Wood, “Struggle over the Puritans.”

³³ For two important reviews marking and making sense of this shift, see Sandra Gustafson, “Histories of Democracy and Empire,” *American Quarterly* 59.1 (2007): 107–133; and especially, Sandra Gustafson and Gordon Hutner, Projecting Early American Literary Studies, a special issue published simultaneously in *Early American Literature* 45.2 (2010) and *William and Mary Quarterly* 22.2 (2010).

complexity to early New England. Since the early 1990s, the puritans of the puritan origin thesis have dissolved before us: no longer a coherent group of immigrants who all identified with a well-articulated theology, the puritans are understood today as a collection of individuals from a variety of backgrounds, adhering to various and conflicting orthodoxies, each expressing differing levels of devotion while shifting and developing distinct practices, beliefs, activities, and writings. The evidence that puritans thought of themselves as commissioned with a solitary, divine mission to save the world turns out to be rather scant – at best. A quote taken here or there to support the point often comes out of context. The puritans, it would appear, did not see themselves as Miller or Bercovitch later did. Instead, the process of conversion or of migration – the pulls and pushes that caused an individual to join a loosely defined movement – involved several motives and considerations. Religion was certainly a prominent factor, and perhaps the most consistent, but by no means the only one. More importantly, even where religion played the leading role in a particular puritan's life, how that religion functioned could be quite different from one puritan to the next.

Yet the greatest error of past puritan studies was the sense that American puritans were “left all alone with America,” as Perry Miller once put it.³⁴ They were, in fact, never alone. Nor did they ever sever their links to England. Nor were they left out of the wider global connections of the early modern world. Only when we let go of the origins myth can we see these other peoples, cultures, and connections that enrich the narrative. The history and literature of puritanism is a history and literature of contact, encounter, and constant interrelations, sometimes very near and sometimes quite far distant. Like others along the Atlantic seaboard, these English settlers found themselves disoriented by their full engagements both east and west – across the ocean and across land, inflicting and enduring suffering as they settled on the territory of others with rights bestowed on them by an English crown.³⁵ Far from an isolated origin, the full scope of puritan literature in America increasingly makes sense only within a framework that spans the Americas, the Caribbean, the Atlantic

³⁴ Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, 15. For the classic critique of Perry Miller's position here and its consequences, see Amy Kaplan, “‘Left Alone with America’: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 3–21.

³⁵ This sense of the disorientation and the Pilgrims' seeming loss of a coherent identity is best described by Kathleen Donegan. See Donegan, *Seasons of Misery: Catastrophe and Colonial Settlement in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

Ocean, and even the global trade networks that shaped their daily lives. The early English settlers of New England – who always thought of themselves as *English* and were only much later called “American” – can no longer be approached without considering this broader context. With the realization of a whole new set of places at play, with old methods revived and new approaches tried, we have come to discover so much more about who these puritans were, what they wrote, and why they wrote the way they did. And still, there is so much more to learn.

PART I

Places

CHAPTER I

Native America
Taking a Step Back from Plymouth Rock

Drew Lopenzina

He became profitable to them in acquainting them with many things concerning the state of the country.

—William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*

There is an ingenious passage in Kurt Vonnegut's famous World War II novel, *Slaughterhouse Five*, in which the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, who has come unstuck in time, is watching a documentary on the war and perceives he is viewing the film backward. From his vantage, it appears the destruction caused by an Allied bombing is miraculously reversed, the gutted buildings springing once more into upright positions and the great firestorms compressed as though by giant vacuums, all their shrapnel, smoke, and flame sucked up into compact metal cylinders that rise into the sky and become absorbed back into the bellies of the planes. As the scene unspools, the planes, flying backward in formation, return to their bases overseas where all the newly cased explosives are carefully removed from their holds and shipped to factories, the dangerous parts disassembled into minerals, and those minerals safely embosomed in the earth in secret remote locations throughout the nation where, as Vonnegut tells us, "they would never hurt anyone again."¹ It is a passage suffused with bittersweet irony, as it reminds us of the irrevocable nature of war and destruction, the things that cannot be turned back or put right.

When, sometime in mid-December of 1620, William Bradford (an earlier Billy Pilgrim of sorts) and his congregationalist cohorts managed their first nimble steps from their shallop onto Plymouth Rock and from there to shore, they too set in motion a series of events that would be impossible to turn back; although it is tempting to indulge in a similar exercise – to imagine Bradford withdrawing his bootheel from that sea-slicked rock and returning to the *Mayflower* with his grim-bearded

¹ Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five* (New York: Dial Press, 1969), 93–94.

brethren, only to have her hoist sail and tack in reverse all the way home to England. Or to conjure further scenes across the Eastern seaboard of devastated Indigenous communities rising up once more, health restored as invisible pathogens wind through a maze of cells and bloodstreams, exiting through the pores only to reattach themselves to blankets, beads, cookpots, and other trade goods, all respectfully returned to their original cargo holds; and of pale white strangers dislodging flags and crosses of discovery from the earth, the sepia-toned coastlines of their elaborate maps vanishing upon the tips of quills that sip the ink from parchment and dispense it back into their wells; and, at last, the great galleons themselves retracing their courses over ocean blue, back to their original ports, back to the old world, having thought better of their doctrines, their claims, their insatiable desires for land and wealth. In their wake, on this North American shore, Wōpanāak, Dawnland, to which the name “America” can no longer be appended, its thriving villages redolent with song and drumming, women tending green and gold fields of corn, woodlands and waterways teeming with many types of beings, stories, stars, life, all of it unmarred by the incident of colonization.

This too is a bittersweet act of the imagination, although it is consistent with the processes of decolonization to take this cognitive step back and attempt to disentangle one’s thought from the howling wilderness long planted there by settler colonialism. And not only to imagine the land prior to colonization but to reconsider all that came after in a way that frees itself from the impressions overlaid by centuries of oppressive settler colonial thought. William Bradford, stepping from Plymouth Rock, conjured a landscape that was one part typology, two parts hyperbole, fashioning for posterity a “desert wilderness” that had little tangible connection to the vibrant and ordered world he actually entered. He spoke chillingly of a land populated by “wild beasts and wild men” and the country itself as manifesting a “wild and savage hue.”² If various other reports from the colonies saw the land through a more opportunistic lens, they nevertheless retained Bradford’s sense of the disorder, the savagery, that yet reigned over these unimproved reaches.

Bradford’s early descriptions of the land he called “New England” contributed to an archive heavily invested in racializing the landscape, imbuing this space with subhuman qualities that positioned it in a perpetual state of warfare with the settlers themselves. Scholars of the period

² William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. Caleb Johnson ([Philadelphia]: Xlibris, 2006), 112–113.

have largely maintained that race was not yet an active rhetorical ingredient at this stage of colonization and that the early settlers viewed Indigenous peoples as existing on an equal human footing with themselves, only at a less-advanced stage of development. Historian Karen Ordhal Kupperman, for instance, assures us that “there was no doubt on the part of any English person who actually went to America that the Indians were fully human.”³ Such a perspective, arguably, would have allowed for peaceful coexistence rather than a legacy of containment and attempted genocide.⁴ Philosopher Charles Mills suggests otherwise, however, in his book *The Racial Contract*, where he observes the battle against “savagery” is “in a sense permanent as long as the savages continue to exist, contaminating (and being contaminated by) the non-Europeanized space around them.”⁵ Mills argues that the conceptualization of a wild frontier would prove a powerful and lasting metaphor for the validation of colonial conquest – an operative trope that worked to depersonalize acts of violence and appropriation, making the land itself, in addition to its inhabitants, an existential threat in need of being tamed and bent to the will of that which was called civilization.

Many of us, if we think about early New England settlement at all, still find ourselves ensnared in that dark dense forest primeval inscribed by Bradford and others. And if we think about the Indigenous inhabitants of this time, there remains a tendency to look for them right where Bradford left them, as “wild” beings moving about without order or complexity in that “savage” space. The settler narrative appears so complete, so totalizing, that it leaves many of us little or no cognitive space to properly imagine a world prior to colonization or, perhaps more importantly, to imagine how communities of Wampanoags, Abenakis, Massachusetts, Narragansetts, Nausets, Nipmucs, Pequots, and others drew on their own vibrant frameworks of culture and tradition to respond to the crisis of colonization. Their societal structure, their complexity, and their legitimacy are erased by a series of simple signifiers deployed precisely for the purposes of

³ Karen Ordhal Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 2.

⁴ The insertion of race into the narrative of Puritan settlement is relatively new, although its counterpoint, the idea that race was *not* a consideration among the Puritans, takes form with Roy Harvey Pearce’s famous 1953 study, *The Savages of America*, later titled *Savagism and Civilization*. Pearce argued that the early settlers viewed the Natives as an unimproved version of themselves and actively endeavored to incorporate Native people into their presumably advanced civilization – a project and belief that was abandoned only after the revolutionary war. This view is still oft-repeated, as in Kupperman’s 2000 study. But this argument depends on a reductive notion of racialized discourse and the deliberate manner in which it seeks to marginalize specific groups of people based on highly subjective and constantly fluid projections of cultural and spatial difference.

⁵ Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 47.

racialization and exploitation – settler colonial perceptions that, in fact, fully precede the conditions of colonization. Part of the project of decolonization, then, is to comprehend how the howling wilderness inscribed on the page of history was but one more European import, a projection of the imbalance of the settler colonial mind as it entered Native space.

The aim of this essay is not to imagine, in isolation, a precolonial world but to reframe the moment of settlement in New England from a decolonizing perspective, requiring that we look beyond the myth of savagery perpetuated on the sole authority of colonial reportage and begin to privilege instead the views of Indigenous stakeholders of a given history and region. Simply recognizing that such views even exist has often proven difficult, particularly when it comes to respecting oral histories and traditions that typically escape the archival imprint of the colonizers. In his history, *The Middle Ground*, Richard White refers us to “a historical landscape that consists largely of dim shadows” (even here the metaphor of darkened space adheres), a “fractured society” preserved by “fractured memory.” He insists that “to pretend otherwise is to deceive.” Such shadows seem to throw a veil over the Indigenous civilizations that not only thrived in these spaces but, in many cases, continue to carry traditions, languages, and histories forward into the present day. White assures us that this “fragmentary, distorted world is, for the historian, good enough,” but the deception and the pretension to which he alludes remain a problem, as they seem to point back at those who *do* claim some knowledge of this past – those whose “fractured” memories may have at least as much claim to authority as does the university-trained historian.⁶

In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith claims that “the negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly ‘primitive’ and ‘incorrect’ and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization.”⁷ Smith acknowledges that “colonialism brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world.”⁸ She challenges the idea, however, that these shortcomings are somehow endemic to oral culture. Rather, they are the outcomes

⁶ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2.

⁷ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 31.

⁸ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 29.

of violent colonial processes deliberately designed to negate Indigenous presence, to shred its authority, and to silence its contribution. For Smith, “reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization.”⁹

Throughout four hundred years of colonial history-keeping, rarely has it been suggested that Indigenous modes of retaining and relating history were, to echo White, “good enough” or, for that matter, even marginally sufficient. As Smith asserts, a presumed characteristic of Indigenous peoples is that “we could not use our minds or intellects. We could not invent things, we could not create institutions or history, we could not imagine, we could not produce anything of value.”¹⁰ The term “orality” itself has long been shorthand for the perception that a people reliant on orally communicated ideas and traditions are incapable of reproducing authoritative representations of the past. The designation reduces Native presence prior to colonization to a state and condition of “prehistory,” casting all claims to culture and continuance beyond the point of contact into a kind of cognitive desert wilderness.

More recently, however, Native Studies scholars have been contesting these entrenched notions and have attempted to marshal knowledge of localized Indigenous histories, traditions, stories, languages, and belief systems toward a reevaluation of the archive as it is known and understood. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, in their essay “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” have noted that “indigenous peoples are those who have creation stories, not colonization stories.”¹¹ Whereas settler colonial origin myth sanctifies the arrival in a promised land, developing ceremonies, relics, temples, and touchstones that seek to consecrate their delivery to that space, Indigenous peoples know themselves to be of a certain place from the time of creation and their stories often bind them to that geographical space, allowing them to point to the precise locations where they emerged from the land. In the Indigenous Northeast, those creation stories speak of collaborations between human and animal beings who assist one another in fashioning the world we inhabit. Such stories create the epistemological framework on which Indigenous history is maintained.

Abenaki historian Lisa Brooks, elaborating on this Indigenous ethos of collaboration, refers to this Native space as “the common pot,” a useful metaphor she draws from oral tradition but also finds repeatedly referenced in the recorded speeches of Native leaders from the eighteenth and

⁹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 31. ¹⁰ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 26.

¹¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1.1 (2012): 1–40.

nineteenth centuries. The common pot, as Brooks tells us, “is that which feeds and nourishes. It is the wigwam that feeds the family, the village that feeds the community, the networks that sustain the village.”¹² The challenge laid out by Brooks and other like-minded scholars is nothing less than “the recovery of Native space” – employing best historical practices to merge archival research with Indigenous-centered knowledge to form new and more precise rhetorical models for comprehending the world into which Bradford stumbled.¹³

The Native communities Brooks describes were organized in a web of villages, clans, and sachemships connected by extensive land routes and waterways across the Northeast. Apart from their unique civic structure that was ordered through a body of laws and traditions bound up in the maintenance of kinship relations, these communities developed practices mindful of establishing reciprocal ties with the nonhuman world and maintaining balance within the rich but delicate ecosystems supporting them. Natives of the Northeast practiced controlled burns of fields and forests to facilitate hunting and planting; they were no strangers to the idea of crop rotation; and their system of agriculture, commonly known as the “three sisters,” allowed for corn, beans, and squash to grow in a symbiotic relationship ensuring productivity while proving less labor-intensive than colonial practices. Potawatomie biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer observes that “when the colonists on the Massachusetts shore first saw indigenous gardens, they inferred that the savages did not know how to farm. To their minds, a garden meant straight rows of single species, not a three-dimensional sprawl of abundance.”¹⁴ Although foreign to the colonial aesthetic of agriculture, these Indigenous “gardens” thrived and, according to Kimmerer, their very diversity served as protection from weeds and pests.¹⁵ Whatever their misgivings, colonists were eager to partake of this bounty, prompting one early settler to declare these were “the goodliest Corne fields that was ever seene in any Countrey.”¹⁶

We dismiss Native systems of land management and their deep generational knowledge of local ecosystems at our own peril. One of the most

¹² Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3–4.

¹³ *The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* is the subtitle of Brooks’s book, *The Common Pot*.

¹⁴ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 129.

¹⁵ Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 139.

¹⁶ George Percy, “Discourse,” in *Capt. John Smith: Writings with Other Narratives of Roanoke, Jamestown, and the First Settlers of the English Settlement of America*, ed. James Horn (New York: Library of America, 2007), 927.

enduring stories of the Plymouth settlement is how their Native ally, the Patuxet known as Squanto, showed them how to plant on this foreign soil, introducing them to the practice of sowing fish with their corn. This process added important nutrients to the soil and proved indispensable to any successful harvest. Nevertheless, historian William Cronon, whose ground-breaking *Changes in the Land* was one of the first works to challenge the notion of an Indigenous “wilderness,” suggests that Native peoples of the Dawnland would not have possessed the scientific acumen to know to manure their nitrogen-poor soil with the carcasses of fish. He writes, “Squanto probably learned the technique while being held captive in Europe, and if any Indians used it in New England, they did so in an extremely limited area.” In support of this claim, Cronon cites William Wood, who observed the Natives were “too lazy” to catch fish and cart it to their fields.¹⁷ In this case, the snide remark of one colonist is given more historical weight than all the other considerable evidence to the contrary. A nineteenth-century report to the US Commissioner of Fisheries, however, noted that the Algonquian word *Munnawhatteaug*, applied to fish commonly referred to as menhaden, literally translates as “fertilizer,” and the term was used for herring or alewife as well.¹⁸ In this case, a perfunctory knowledge of Native language makes available associations still deemed improbable by mainstream historians. The colonizers, however (William Wood included), were quick to adopt such Indigenous agricultural practices for themselves because their survival depended on it. As related in the 1622 tract *Mourt's Relation* (the first publication of the colony, authored, in part, by Bradford), “We set the last spring some twenty acres of Indian corn, and sowed some six acres of barley and pease, and, according to the manner of the Indians, we manured our ground with herrings, or rather shads, which we have in great abundance and take with great ease at our doors.”¹⁹

Today such practices, sometimes referred to as traditional ecological knowledge, are being paid a great deal more attention by western as well as Indigenous scientists, as it is recognized how Native traditions often take into account intricacies of a given ecosystem that have been overlooked by western science and can provide important keys to sustainability. Potawatomie environmental scientist Kyle White refers to such processes

¹⁷ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 45.

¹⁸ G. Browne Goode, “The Use of Agricultural Fertilizers by the American Indians and the Early English Colonists,” *The American Naturalist* 14.7 (1880): 473–479.

¹⁹ *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth* (Bedford: Applewood Books, 1963), 81–82.

as a “collective continuance,” in which “the bonds that create interdependency between human institutions (e.g., lodges, ceremonies, offices) and ecosystems (e.g., habitats, watersheds)” engendering a broadly construed ecological system, of “interacting humans, nonhuman beings (animals, plants, etc.) and entities (spiritual, inanimate, etc.), and landscapes (climate regions, boreal zones, etc.)” all operate in a manner that ensures cooperation and adaptability.²⁰ Kimmerer articulates this idea more clearly, perhaps, when she states that the Indigenous inhabitants of the Dawnland maintained “ethical prescriptions for respectful hunting, family life, [and] ceremonies that made sense for their world,” drawing from stories and traditions that viewed nonhuman species as a “lifeboat for the people.”²¹ Such a land ethic not only ensured the regularity of civic traditions, religious beliefs, and family life for Algonquian communities but suggested that they should harvest no more than what was needed for the personal consumption of the immediate village – in stark contrast to the form of resource extraction and commodification that would, and still does, define a western land ethic.

There is little historical ambiguity regarding the overall productivity of Native agriculture, and yet it remains one of the first casualties of the American imaginary. To recognize the existence of fertile Indigenous fields is to reject the claim of a desert wilderness tamed by intrepid Pilgrims – a myth central to notions of nationhood in the United States. At the very least, we are often forced to maintain two opposing thoughts in our heads at one time. We face a similar conundrum when we speak of Native writing – a phrase that must strike many as an oxymoron. And yet oral tradition, properly understood, was no stranger to the concept that records could be preserved or information inscribed and communicated over distances. Scholars including Lisa Brooks, Hilary Wyss, Kristina Bross, Margaret Bruchac, Birgit Brander Rasmussen, and others have commented on the intricate manner in which Indigenous material culture, although not recognized as *literacy* by western commentators or historians, was used in various ways to transmit cultural information. Bross and Wyss observe how “burial goods, basket patterns, pictographs, mats that line the interiors of wigwams, and even utensils reinforce oral exchanges with physical inscriptions whose functions, although quite varied, always communicate

²⁰ Kyle White, “Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Justice,” *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* 9 (2018): 125–144 (133–134).

²¹ Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 7–8.

something to members of the communities in which they are produced.”²² Brooks points to the uses of *awikhigans* (markings left on trees to convey information to others on the trail) as well as birchbark writing and wampum, which, as she notes, “represented the binds between nations, recorded communal narratives and commitments, and enacted renewal and change.”²³ Although little acknowledged or understood by most Americans today, these mediums represented crucial practices informing the lives of Northeastern Native peoples.

Wampum consists of beads fashioned from the quahog, a thick-shelled edible clam that washed up in great quantities on the southern shores of New England. When woven into strings, belts, and girdles, it carried diplomatic and spiritual significance that traveled across Indigenous boundaries. Wampum was used as a mnemonic device to call to mind certain laws and traditions, formalize political relationships, and bind treaties. The protocols of wampum usage are layered and profound in how they weave together elements of realpolitik and storied tradition, asking that parties in conflict wipe away their tears, remove the obstructions from their ears and throats, and enter into a ceremonial space where good thought might prevail unencumbered from all the bitter feelings engendered by grief and war. Although the cultural significance of wampum was fluid and varied from one Indigenous nation to the next, it remained central to the ceremonial lives of Northeast Natives and was an important component in networks of exchange and reciprocity that stretched throughout the Eastern seaboard, as far north as Quebec, inland to the Great Lakes, and beyond.

Although the puritan colonizers themselves were frequently in the presence of wampum and became implicated in its ceremonial structure, they had little sense of its significance or the functions it performed. As Bradford would almost incredulously confess many years later, “neither did the English of this plantation . . . so much as know what it was, much less that it was a commodity.”²⁴ It hardly occurred to the settlers that while *they* were recording their transactions with the Natives, the Natives were also recording *them*. Such documents still go unappreciated for the important information they preserve. Abenaki anthropologist Margaret Bruchac observes how “objects that had been considered, in Indigenous

²² Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss, “Introduction,” in *Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology*, ed. Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 4.

²³ Brooks, *Common Pot*, 9–10. ²⁴ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 255.

communities, as potentially powerful living agents of ritual expression were rendered mute, if not dead” when taken out of their cultural and political contexts, cased under museum glass and hermetically sealed from interpretation.²⁵ Nevertheless, wampum belts, quipus, codices, winter counts, textiles, and other Indigenous artifacts continue to carry poignant information concerning how Indigenous peoples define their relationships to the land and the different cultures occupying it.

Additionally, as Brooks reminds us, “the land itself is an archive that demands interpretation.” Brooks recalls traveling with her father and other members of her tribe at a young age and listening to stories about the land that had been passed down from one generation to the next.²⁶ Her recollection is of an experience that has been repeated and shared for generations across tribes and geographies. Bruchac writes that some of the oldest Algonkian oral traditions “describe how ancient beings left physical traces, by marking the landscape with their footprints, reshaping natural earth formations, carving out rivers, doing battle with superhuman elementals and molding giant megafauna down to their present size.”²⁷ If western scholarship is dismissive of such folkloric detail, Bruchac reminds us that “it is doubtful the earliest white settlers were even aware of the ancient geological events that Algonkian stories and place names bore witness to.”²⁸

The storied landscape is of interest not only in the way it adheres to a particular Native tradition, but also because it is vested with the multi-generational knowledge of people who have lived in a particular space, traveled it, cultivated it, been nourished by it for countless centuries and whose traditions have, in fact, sprung organically from these developed lifeways. Such stories carry practical, ethical, and political implications pertaining to the stewardship of the land and how to maintain balance between humans and other beings inhabiting that ecosystem. This is knowledge that sustained European settlers when they first came here – it sustained the puritan colonists, and without it, William Bradford could

²⁵ Margaret M. Bruchac, *Savage Kin: Indigenous Informants and American Anthropologists* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018), 180.

²⁶ Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 14.

²⁷ Margaret M. Bruchac, “Earthshapers and Placemakers: Algonkian Indian Stories and the Landscape,” in *Indigenous Archaeologies: Decolonizing Theories and Practice*, ed. Claire Smith and H. Martin Wobst (New York: Routledge, 2005),

²⁸ Bruchac, “Earthshapers,” 59.

not have survived one full year in the “desert wilderness” he imported with him from England. It is knowledge that might sustain us still.

Brooks relates how “a central question that arose in Native communities throughout the northeast had to do with how to incorporate ‘beings’ from Europe into Native space and how to maintain the network of relations in the wake of the consequences – including disease and resource depletion – that Europeans brought to Algonquian shores.”²⁹ Instructive is an early encounter between the Dutch and the Mohawk along the Hudson River in 1613, resulting in a diplomatic agreement recalled by the *Teiohate Kaswenta* or Two Row Wampum, a belt that remains to this day in the possession of the Haudenosaunee, or Six Nations, of the Iroquois. Although the corresponding European document has been lost to history, and therefore has often been discounted by historians, the terms of the agreement are still known and observed by the Haudenosaunee themselves. Tuscarora scholar Rick Hill notes that the Two Row wampum records the first encounter between the Ogwe’o: weh (Original People), represented in this case by the Mohawks, and the Skaghneghtadaronni (Dutch), recalling even the location where the treaty was made on Tawasgunshi Hill, two miles outside modern-day Albany. The agreement is founded in the conviction that “the creator did not intend that we would live in discord” and is consistent with ancient Haudenosaunee laws calling for peace, strength through unity, and the intentionality of good-mindedness (*Ga’nigoi:yoh*).³⁰ More specifically, however, the wampum belt records how two different cultural entities agreed to share the same space. The pictographic design of two solid rows of purple wampum, separated and contained within a field of white, suggests how the Mohawk will continue in their canoe and the Dutch in their boat, set upon parallel paths, each with their cultural wares contained in their respective vessels, moving through the common pot together in peace.

Whether the Wampanoags exchanged wampum with the Plymouth colonists when they first made formal contact is not known or, at least, does not specifically announce itself in the colonial archive. Having no comprehension of its cultural value, the settlers make only passing reference to its presence. This, however, would not have hindered seasoned Wampanoag diplomats from enforcing their protocols. Little doubt exists

²⁹ Brooks, *Common Pot*, 7.

³⁰ Rick Hill, “Talking Points on History and Meaning of the Tow Row Wampum Belt,” <http://honorthetworow.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TwoRowTalkingPoints-Rick-Hill.pdf>, accessed July 10, 2019.

that when Massasoit (the official title of the Wampanoag leader whose actual name was Ousamequin) introduced himself to the Plymouth colonizers on the spring equinox of 1621, it was in a posture of formality, with “a great chain of white bone beads around his neck.”³¹ This chain is referenced in *Mourt's Relation*, its appearance directly following the stated terms of the treaty struck between the Wampanoag and the Plymouth settlers on this occasion. The settlers seemed to reach a similar accord with Iyanough, a sachem of the Mashpee Wampanoag in Cummaquid. Having concluded their peace in a ceremony where the women of the tribe “joined hand in hand, singing and dancing before the shallop, the men also showing all the kindness they could,” Iyanough then took “a bracelet from about his neck” and draped it over the neck of Edward Winslow.³² Whether consciously or not, the colonists necessarily equated such gestures with the peace agreements being struck.

Massasoit's first visit had been preceded two days earlier by the Abenaki diplomat Samoset, an intriguing figure described by the colonists as “free of speech” and “of seemly carriage,” who boldly wandered unannounced into the Plymouth settlement in order to clear a path for the desired treaty. He made it a point to welcome the Plymouth colonists into the common pot, proceeding to discourse “of the whole country and of every province” and informing the settlers of their obligations as inhabitants of this shared space. Samoset was insistent, on that first meeting, of extracting gestures of reciprocity. He brought gifts. He explained to the settlers how they had wronged the neighboring Nauset by digging up their graves and stealing their corn. And he declined the invitation to leave once night had fallen, obliging the colony's leaders to extend him the same hospitality that the Wampanoags would invariably show the settlers in all their future dealings. As recalled in *Mourt's Relation*, “we would gladly have been rid of him at night but he was not willing to go.”³³

In the discussions that would follow, Massasoit proposed a pact of peace similar to that which the Haudenosaunee had extended to the Dutch only eight years earlier. The Plymouth colonists must have appeared before the Wampanoag as tired, stern, hungry, and poor, but, as related, the Wampanoags “made semblance unto us of friendship and amity.” They sang and danced to mark the treaty and they left the English to marvel, in the bizarre twisted syntax of settler colonialism, that “we cannot yet perceive but that they want to have peace with us.”³⁴ The so-called

³¹ *Mourt's Relation*, 57.

³² *Mourt's Relation*, 71–72.

³³ *Mourt's Relation*, 50–52.

³⁴ *Mourt's Relation*, 57.

Pilgrims, in the mental war they had already declared prior to their arrival, had allowed themselves no conceptual space for such a thing as Native diplomacy. It was presumably not possible for men who were already predetermined to be “wild.” Despite the fifty-year peace with the Wampanoags that followed, the colonists studiously maintained a posture of militancy, provoking one “offensive” war after another in the region and prompting their spiritual mentor John Robinson, who remained in England, to reprimand, “Oh, how happy a thing had it been, if you had converted some, before you had killed any.”³⁵

It is actually surprising how little direct thought the early colonizers of New England seem to have given to the Indigenous inhabitants of the land they wished to occupy. Prior to his famous landfall passage in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Bradford mentions the Native people of North America only once. Nor do they appear in any of the other documents leading up to the 1620 Pilgrim embarkment – not in their original patent agreements nor in the 1621 Pierce Patent, which granted “one hundred acres of ground for every person so to be transported . . . in any place or places wheresoever not already inhabited by any English.”³⁶ The one reference to Native peoples that does exist is marked by an underlying mixture of willful erasure and anxiety that accurately defines the paradoxical thinking of the settlers. Bradford wrote that “the place they had thoughts on, was some of those vast, and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitful, and fit for habitation; being devoid of all civil inhabitants.” He proceeds, however, to comment on the continual danger that will be posed by the “savage people,” whom he describes as “cruel,” “barbarous,” “merciless,” and “most treacherous.”³⁷ They are, in short, the inconvenient occupants of this “unpeopled” landscape – entities defined not by human traits but by their innate adversarial opposition to all things civilized.

The dynamic of *unpeopling* the landscape operates in a fashion that, in the words of Mills, morally justifies “seizure, expropriation, settlement, development . . . There is just no one there. Or even if it is conceded that humanoid entities are present, it is denied that any real appropriation, any human shaping of the world, is taking place.”³⁸ This overall failure to acknowledge settled Native presence on the land was an inelegant solution to a dire problem. Because the original patent for the puritans offers no suggestion concerning how to deal with preexisting inhabitants, the puritans must have looked anxiously at the charter and accompanying

³⁵ Quoted in Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 195.

³⁶ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 523.

³⁷ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 56–57.

³⁸ Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 49.

instructions for the earlier Virginia Company that did, at least, provide detailed strategies on this topic. Among other bits of useful advice that the puritans clearly followed was the concern about how they would feed themselves and the necessity to “imploy some few of your company to trade with them [the “naturals”] for corn and all other . . . victuals if you have any . . . for not being sure how your own seed corn will prosper the first year, to avoid the danger of famine, use and endeavor to store yourselves of the country corn.”³⁹ It was this “country corn,” or the surplus store of the local Natives, that would, in fact, sustain both the Jamestown and Plymouth settlements through the most difficult years of establishing themselves in the common pot.

The Virginia charter opaquely acknowledges what the New England colonists apparently could not: that the Natives were agricultural producers upon whom the puritans would depend for sustenance. The Plymouth settlers were fortunate, not only for the inclination of Massasoit to treat for peace but to be able to trade up and down the coast for supplies of corn and beans. Although it is commonly understood that the “planters,” albeit with the help of Squanto, grew their own food and survived by their own labor, Edward Winslow writes of multiple foraging excursions in which the settlers were treated “very kindly, and where they bought eight or ten hogsheads of corn and beans . . . also at a place called Mattachiest where they had like entertainment and corn also.”⁴⁰ He would report of those first years, “we must have perished, unless God had raised some unknown or extraordinary means for our preservation.”⁴¹ That those means were neither “unknown” nor “extraordinary” but were, in fact, achieved through the offices of Indigenous diplomacy, trade, and stewardship are details that remain *unwitnessed* by Winslow and others. Any perusal of the archive will reveal that Native agriculture was essential for survival, but the European reporters were incapable of speaking such truths outright. The settlers marveled at their good fortune, but refused to credit their Indigenous neighbors with the political and cultural acumen of having engineered all this in their favor. Later historians have willfully followed this example.

³⁹ John Smith, “Instructions, by Way of Advice, for the Intended Voyage to Virginia,” in *Virtual Jamestown: First-Hand Accounts – By Date*, www.virtualjamestown.org/exist/cocoon/jamestown/fha/11039, accessed July 10, 2019.

⁴⁰ Edward Winslow, *Good News from New England*, ed. Kelly Wisecup (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 72.

⁴¹ Winslow, *Good News*, 68.

The Mayflower pilgrims were sustained by their being welcomed into the common pot. On their arrival, they settled into those very spaces vacated by the plagues their countrymen had transported there, surprised to find “so many goodly fields, and so well-seated, without men to dress and manure the same.”⁴² Even as the land nourished these colonists, however, their discourse remained fixed on the notion of wilderness space – something to be improved and commodified, but certainly not shared. When Bradford acknowledged Squanto as “a special instrument sent of God, for their good beyond their expectation,” who “directed them how to set their corn, where to take fish, and to procure other commodities . . . for their profit,” he simply lumped Tisquantum in with the other profitable commodities he was fortunate enough to acquire.⁴³ Samoset, too, was lauded for how “profitable” he was in “acquainting them with many things concerning the state of the country.”⁴⁴ Winslow insisted, “I cannot but think that God hath a purpose to give that land as an inheritance to our Nation, and great pity it were that it should long lie in so desolate a state.”⁴⁵ As Cronon observes, European reporters reduced much of what they saw in the Americas to its implied value as commodity, a distorted outlook that “treated members of an ecosystem as isolated and extractable units.”⁴⁶ Even wampum, which lay at the ceremonial heart of Indigenous ceremony, diplomacy, and exchange, came to be seen by the settlers as mere currency, so much in demand that, as Bradford later warned, “it hath now continued a current commodity about this 20 years; and it may prove a drug.”⁴⁷

Some two hundred years after the *Mayflower* landing at Plymouth, the Pequot minister, author, and activist William Apess stood amazed at how descendants of the settlers continued to dishonor the relationship extended them by the Wampanoags in the spring of 1621. In his 1836 *Eulogy on King Philip*, Apess writes how Massasoit and others were “showing the Pilgrims how to live in their country and find support for their wives and little ones; and for all this, they were receiving the applause of being savages.”⁴⁸ The Philip whom Apess eulogized was Massasoit’s son, Metacom, who would become the ostensible leader of the 1675–1676 conflict known as King Philip’s War – the event that finally shattered the fifty-year peace brokered between Massasoit and the Pilgrims. It is

⁴² *Mourt’s Relation*, 63. ⁴³ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 133.

⁴⁴ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 131. ⁴⁵ Winslow, *Good News*, 102.

⁴⁶ Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 21. ⁴⁷ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 255.

⁴⁸ William Apess, “Eulogy on King Philip,” in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O’Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 281.

interesting to note that, at the close of that bloody war, as Philip was flushed from his holdout in the swamps of Swansea and subsequently killed and dismembered, the puritan commander Benjamin Church reports on an impromptu meeting with Philip's military and spiritual advisor Annawon. In this surreal forest encounter, Annawon, now a prisoner of the colonists, takes up what Church refers to as "Philip's Belt," which he describes as "curiously wrought with Wompom, being Nine inches broad, wrought with black and white Wompom, in various figures and flowers, and pictures of many birds and beasts." Annawon then proceeded to offer an oration giving an account "of what mighty success he had formerly in Wars against many Nations of Indians, when served Aushmequin [Ousamequin, or Massasoit], Philips Father."⁴⁹

Church believed that, in some wilderness rite of his own imagining, he was being paid tribute for his superior prowess as a warrior and that, as a result, Annawon was passing over Philip's "royalties" to him. Church's interpretation of the event remains cloaked, however, in the rhetoric of desert wilderness, unable to imagine that Philip's war counsellor could discourse on anything other than past wars and past glories. When viewed from a decolonized perspective, however, we must consider that Annawon was asking Church to bear witness to the treaty belt Massasoit wore when the Wampanoag and the settlers first entered into a peaceful relationship at Plymouth some fifty-six years earlier. Annawon was reminding Church to acknowledge and respect the agreements by which the puritans had been welcomed into the common pot – a set of obligations and practices the puritans never truly honored or embraced.

The articulation of Native civilization in the Dawnland as one of community, diplomacy, and peaceful intention often leaves it vulnerable to critiques of political correctness run amok, or places it in line with romanticized notions of the "ecological Indian," that view Native culture prior to civilization as "pristine," "puerile," or "at one with nature." Such rhetorical tactics help to police the boundaries of Indigenous identity, pushing it back into the space of savagery properly reserved for it by colonial reporting. So let us just admit that these occupants of Native space were mere humans, much like the Wampanoag people who still live in the region today, and, as such, susceptible to mistakes, failure, exasperation, breakdowns of protocol, and surely, on occasion, unprovoked

⁴⁹ Benjamin Church, "Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War Which Began in the Year, 1675," in *So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676–1677*, ed. Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 460.

violence. But let us also acknowledge, alongside their commitment to sustaining peaceful coexistence with the many life-forms within the common pot, that often the violence *was* provoked and that, in most circumstances where the archive relates such violence, Native peoples were acting not as “savages” or “wild men” but in a rational and calculated manner to preserve their way of life.

In his *Eulogy on King Philip*, Apess asked that we desacralize the day that the pilgrims first landed, recognizing it instead as a day of mourning. He asks that “it be forgotten in your celebrations, in your speeches, and by the burying of the rock that your fathers first put their foot upon,” recognizing, as he did, that the symbols of settler colonialism are in every way as destructive as the history that continues to denigrate the humanity of Native peoples.⁵⁰ Now, after four hundred years of English settlement in the Northeast, it is time to finally disassemble the “desert wilderness.” Literary scholars and historians have been teasing out the inherent irony of Bradford’s claim for decades, and yet it remains a stubborn and resistant root, part of a mythic structure that continues to perform its cultural work despite repeated critical upendings. Perhaps this is because, as a culture, a country, a nation, we want it both ways – we want to be seen as tolerant and inclusive while still valorizing a history of intolerance. I suspect, however, that the four-hundred-year anniversary of the Plymouth Landing *will* be celebrated – there *will* be speeches, parades, and fireworks, and Plymouth Rock, that shrine to settler colonialism, will be burnished rather than buried, made to shine anew with all the luster of western civilization’s triumphant occupation of these shores. Many would consider it an outrageous insult to insist on anything otherwise.

The Wampanoags will be there as well to post their witness, and some small acknowledgment will surely be thrown their way. It bears noting here that, as I write this, the federal government is acting to revoke recognition of tribal lands formally understood to be held in trust for the Mashpee Wampanoag. It is also remarkable to note, however, that, in remembrance of their ancient treaty, an organization known as the General Society of Mayflower Descendants has come out in public support of legislation to protect Wampanoag lands from federal seizure.⁵¹ In some ways this demonstrates how the good work done by Massasoit to welcome

⁵⁰ Apess, “Eulogy,” 286.

⁵¹ Tanner Stening, “Mayflower Descendants Back Mashpee Wampanoag in Land Dispute,” *Cape Cod Times*, December 13, 2018. www.capecodtimes.com/news/20181213/mayflower-descendants-back-mashpee-tribe-in-land-dispute, accessed December 14, 2018.

the Pilgrims to this land, thinking at least seven generations ahead as sachems were wont to do, is still being felt and acknowledged. But as Apess warns, as long as we continue to perpetuate rituals of validation for acts of violence, the legacies of settler colonialism will remain intact and enshrined. How we step forward from here will determine if peaceful coexistence, or even life itself, can continue to be sustained in the common pot.

CHAPTER 2

British Isles

David D. Hall

The puritans who made their way to America in the 1620s and 1630s were the offshoot of a plant rooted deep in the circumstances and legacies of the Protestant Reformation, especially as the Reformation took shape in England and Scotland. To understand what puritans were doing in New England, we have to begin elsewhere, for the place of New England is itself not a beginning but a consequence – an effect of causes long in process before there were ever colonists at Plymouth, Salem, or Boston. Puritanism originated many decades before as a movement for reform of worship and the church in Scotland and England, a movement committed to a certain understanding of redemption – the passage from sin to salvation in the Christian life – that had wide-ranging social, political, and theological ramifications. This chapter maps the basic features of that movement and carries the dynamics forward into the “puritan revolution” of c. 1640–1660, including the theological currents that swirled beyond 1660. All the features mapped here affected the lives, thoughts, aspirations, hopes, audiences, writings, and productions of the American puritans.¹

¹ This chapter comes shaped by a wide engagement with fellow scholars, but see especially the following: Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisionist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiologies, 1570–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); John Coffey, *Politics, Religion, and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); David Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David George Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in*

One way to understand the puritan movement is through the terms and phrases that came to define key battles and debates, carrying over into American puritan literature. The master words in the religious vocabulary of the colonists were not unique to them. Long before John Winthrop set foot on Massachusetts soil in 1630, words such as “law,” “discipline,” “adiaphora,” “antichristian,” and “human inventions” had become weapons in a hard-fought struggle within the Church of England about the meaning of “reformation.” One party (the puritans) lamented that the English government had called this process to a halt before the state church had been fully purified of Catholic “remnants” or revamped to bring it in line with divine law. The impure elements – the “human inventions” added to the sacred revelation of Scripture – had to be removed. Against the puritans stood another party (called “conformists” but not “Anglicans,” a term that arose in the nineteenth century), which accepted the wishes of Elizabeth I and her successors to preserve some of those remnants of Catholicism that the puritans hated.

This struggle had its roots much earlier in the Protestant Reformation. By the middle of the sixteenth century, a few decades after Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli had initiated that movement, Protestants in Europe had divided into three major camps: (1) Lutherans adhering to beliefs and practices endorsed by Martin Luther, (2) Anabaptists (or “radical” reformers) who rejected infant baptism and insisted that churches should never become entangled with the civil state, and (3) Reformed (often referred to as “Calvinists”) situating themselves in between the other two. The Church of England, which split from the Roman Catholic Church under Henry VIII in 1534, was neither fish nor fowl, although certainly not Anabaptist and, because of Henry VIII’s conservatism, as close to Catholicism as a Protestant could get.

When Henry’s young son Edward VI succeeded him in 1547 and governance came into the hands of his uncles, the Church of England moved much closer to Reformed-style Protestantism, as did the long-serving Thomas Cranmer, who oversaw the preparing of the Book of Common Prayer (1549), followed quickly (1552) by a much-revised version that eliminated most aspects of Catholic-style worship. Edward’s death in 1553 meant that the monarchy came into the hands of his older

Reformation Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Paul Seaver, *Wallington’s World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); Baird Tipson, *Hartford Puritanism: The Terrifying God of Thomas Hooker and Samuel Stone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: Life of an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

stepsister Mary, a devout Catholic, who used her authority to restore Catholicism as the country's official faith. After she died in 1558, her stepsister Elizabeth reversed this process, leaving it to a new group of bishops, clergy, and high-ranking laity to decide what forms of worship, structure, and doctrine the Church of England would adopt.

The initiative in answering this question lay with clergy who had moved to the Continent to avoid being persecuted during the reign of Mary Tudor. These "Marian exiles" settled in towns and cities where the Reformed had become dominant – including Frankfurt, Basel, Emden, and most famously Geneva, the city hailed by exiled Scottish minister John Knox as "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on the earth since the days of the Apostles."² Firsthand contact with Reformed-style worship, ministry, and doctrine was seductive. It was bracing to encounter a version of Protestantism so opposed to "idolatry," so explicit in its recognition of human sinfulness and divine sovereignty, and so committed to scripture as divine law. For John Calvin of Geneva and other makers of the Reformed, the assumptions and practices Catholics attached to Holy Communion were idolatrous. So were relics, statues of the saints, altars, and practices such as pilgrimages. These and much else violated the Second Commandment (prohibiting the worship of false gods). Responding to the Catholic insistence that Christ was physically present in the bread and wine used during Holy Communion, Calvin insisted that he was present in Heaven and nowhere else except spiritually. The reformer also disputed the assertion that the finite could contain the infinite. Soon, his heirs were expanding the scope of idolatry to encompass a broad range of practices or attitudes. In mid-century Scotland and England, Protestant mobs engaged in spasms of iconoclastic violence – toppling statues, smashing altars, breaking stained glass windows, and the like – in order to liberate Christianity from "false" religion.

To these zealous Protestants, divine law had a singular importance. Catholics cloaked themselves in the authority of tradition, but the makers of the Reformed denounced the Roman Church as a composite of "human inventions" introduced long after the true church had been set up by the apostles. The goal was simple: clear out all these "inventions" and restore (or return the church to) the "primitive perfection" of the Christian community before Constantine. In a typical expression of this impulse, the "pilgrim" William Bradford noted in the opening paragraph of his

² John Knox, Letter to Mrs. Anne Locke, December 9, 1556, in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1895), 4: 240.

history of Plymouth Plantation that the drama unfolding in the sixteenth century was driven by the insistence that “the churches of God revert to their ancient purity and recover their primitive order, liberty, and beauty.”³

Apart from the principle of adhering to divine law, the most telling legacy of the Reformed to British Protestants may have been the twin concepts of a sanctified church and sanctified society. The master word for each was “discipline,” in two respects. For the church, “discipline” meant that Scripture must be the principal source of its structure and message. For both church and society, the same word signified a process of aligning moral and social behavior with laws of the kind God had laid out in the Ten Commandments. Thus, Martin Bucer, who initiated the Reformation in the city of Strasbourg, initiated a program of moral discipline in that city. Learning firsthand of these efforts, Calvin in turn persuaded the magistrates in Geneva to transfer authority over moral discipline to the church. Thereafter, the lay office of elder was added to a collective “presbytery” that also included pastors, teachers, and deacons, with elders responsible for guarding Holy Communion from the unworthy and ensuring that the members of every local church progressed in “edification,” or loving fellowship. Calvin’s crowning achievement as an organizer was to define a new kind of minister equipped with a singular authority as “ambassador” of Christ and, via the Geneva Company of Pastors and other agencies, introduce the means of training them. Soon, ministers who were highly literate and exemplary in their self-discipline were being trained in colleges at Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, St. Andrews, and elsewhere.

How these themes and practices made their way to mid-sixteenth-century England and Scotland is a story tied to certain books and the people influenced by them. The exile community in Geneva had already prepared a fresh translation of the Bible known ever since as the “Geneva Bible.” What made it unusual was the strongly Reformed commentary attached to chapter and verse in the margins of the folio-size printings. Telling, too, was the exiles’ translation of the Geneva order of worship, which they used in place of the Book of Common Prayer. Meanwhile, the English Protestant writer John Foxe (who lived in Basel) was compiling stories of martyrs who died for their faith – martyrs who validated the superiority of Protestantism to Catholicism. Although Foxe began the book with martyrs of the earliest centuries of Christianity in the west,

³ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 2006), 3.

his real point was to document the nearly three hundred people who died at the stake during the reign of Mary Tudor. Known colloquially as the “Book of Martyrs,” this immense book (in its great nineteenth-century edition it runs to seven fat volumes) owed its unity to the concept of two churches: one wholly corrupt and located in Rome; the other a church that, for many centuries, had been hidden but preserved the truth. The Reformation signaled the emergence of the hidden true church of the faithful few into the open, its adherence to Christ confirmed by the martyrs who refused to succumb to the anti-Christ, that is, the Papacy. These two books – the Geneva Bible and the Book of Martyrs – were enormously popular, widely read, and deeply influential, spurring and shaping the Protestant Reformation in England and Scotland.

As the Marian exiles began returning to England in 1559, they aspired to transform the Church of England along the lines of Reformed theology and practice they had experienced abroad. Yet they quickly learned that Elizabeth wanted less, not more, by way of change. She had her way when, in 1562–1563, the highest governing body of the state church, a Convocation, narrowly rejected a series of Reformed-style proposals relating to worship and ministry. When she heard that some of the clergy in London and elsewhere were refusing to wear a garment known as the surplice, tainted by its Catholic past, she ordered the Archbishop of Canterbury to suspend them unless they fell in line. Suddenly, the fat was in the fire, the dissidents insisting that the surplice was a mark of the anti-Christ, that any bishops who ordered them to wear it were also anti-Christian, and that the Queen had no business telling them what to do. As tensions rose, English Catholics exploited the situation by referring to the dissidents as “puritans,” a reference to an early Christian sect known as the “Cathari,” the pure.

For the more daring reformers, most of them young men associated with Cambridge University, a new phase of agitation began in the 1570s and lasted until c. 1589. These men wanted a “further” or “thorough” reformation that would fully align the Church of England with Reformed practice. Instead of being centered on bishops or Episcopacy, the state church would be administered by a ministry of equals (known as the principle of “parity”), each assigned to a single parish church, a rule directed against situations known as pluralism (a minister receiving revenues from several parishes at the same time) and nonresidency (a minister living elsewhere than in a parish). Church courts would be abolished and discipline relocated to parishes, with lay elders in charge. Supervision of these parishes would be provided by regional “classes.” Establishing a new

mode of worship was as important as establishing a new model of church governance. Already, ardent Protestants had produced a collection of psalms to be sung during church services. These also became part of personal devotions. When it came to Holy Communion, the reformers wanted it to be administered sitting at or standing around a table, with everyone receiving the bread and the wine. The heart of Sunday services consisted of readings from the Bible and sermons that were “practical” because they “applied” lessons from Scripture to everyday life and, especially, to what was described metaphorically as the “heart,” or what was “inward.” According to the influential English theologian William Ames, an effective, evangelical preacher knew how to “sharpen and make specially relevant some general truth . . . [so that] it may pierce the minds of those present with the stirring up of godly affections.”⁴ Within the puritan tradition, the Bible as preached was also regarded as a “means” for communicating forgiveness and grace to sinners.

The visible church was also a means of grace. But to whom? Calvin had argued that it should include everyone. But by the late sixteenth century in England puritans were combining this assumption with the imperative of guarding the sacraments of baptism and communion from the unworthy. Taken to an extreme, this impulse would make the visible church more selective or exclusive, a “little flock,” a tension that would endure until Christ returned in judgment and hypocrites or the unworthy were forever separated from the saints. Alongside this schema the reformers added an emphasis on the church as a community of “living stones” engaged in “edification,” that is, becoming ever more Christ-like in their expressions of mutual love for each other.

When it came to church and state, the Cambridge reformers and the Scottish reformers embraced the two-kingdom model evoked by Martin Luther and endorsed by Calvin and others. According to this model, the church was limited to a “spiritual” authority (and therefore could never persecute someone) and the state a “temporal” version it could employ to protect true religion by punishing heresy, blasphemy, and (within limits) social or moral misbehavior. In Reformed political theology, the emphasis fell as strongly on this partnership as on the differences between the two “kingdoms,” and especially on the imperative – visible in the Old Testament – that monarchs (kings or the “Christian prince”) were responsible for protecting the church from its enemies. This said, the reformers

⁴ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, ed. John D. Eusden (1968; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 193.

pointed out that Christ was the true head of the visible church, not Elizabeth in England or James VI in Scotland. It was therefore the church under Christ that should determine true doctrine and pursue the work of moral discipline.

These arguments were spelled out in books printed in Netherlands or surreptitiously in England and challenged in books written by ministers who defended the Queen's authority over the church and the hybrid of Protestant and Catholic she herself favored. No one openly disclaimed the authority of Scripture. Instead of harping on divine law, however, the moderates emphasized a long-standing principle known as "things indifferent," or *adiaphora*. It signified that, here on earth, the church was entitled to interpret generalized precepts in the Bible through the lens of its own setting or circumstances. Pressed to defend this argument (which Calvin himself made in certain situations), the moderates attached "things indifferent" to the royal supremacy. Because the Queen had been named "Supreme Governor" of the state church in 1559, she was empowered to decide the practical implications of *adiaphora*.

Undaunted, the reformers continued to appeal to the English people (thereby incurring the complaint that they were courting "popularity") and Parliament, which included men who favored a "thorough reformation." Locally, taking a stand meant nonconformity, that is, refusing to adhere to the official rules of the church. Nonconformity was the outcome of a dilemma forced on puritans by the tensions inherent in the pairing of lawful/unlawful, a pairing a few radicals turned against the state church. Denouncing the entire state church as "unlawful" and therefore unable to advance the work of redemption, these extreme puritans withdrew into congregations of their own, a practice that earned them the name of "Separatist." Crackdowns followed and, by the early 1590s, the more outspoken Separatists as well as more moderate critics of the state church had been executed, fallen silent, or, as happened with small groups of Separatists, taken refuge in the Netherlands. A portion of this latter group later left with William Bradford on the *Mayflower* for Plymouth.

In contrast to the advocates of a "thorough reformation" in England, the reformers in Scotland were remarkably successful. Benefiting from the weakness of the monarchy and support from key members of the nobility, an irregular Parliament agreed in 1560 to endorse Protestantism as the national religion. Simultaneously, the reformers accepted a book of worship drawn up in Calvin's Geneva as the official pattern of worship and issued a "Book of Discipline" outlining the kind of ministry and other rules the church should observe. With regents ruling during the infancy

and childhood of James VI, the only child of the country's final Catholic ruler Mary Stuart (who fled Scotland in 1568), the reformers put together a structure for the state church that did away with bishops, excluded clergy from the country's Parliament, and gave general assemblies, the highest governing body of the church, the authority to meet on its own, a scheme detailed in the *Second Book of Discipline* (1581) and conventionally referred to as "Presbyterianism." At a moment of crisis (1584) the young king and the current regent rejected this system, but in 1592 James VI reversed course and endorsed most of it, although continuing to insist on his authority to summon general assemblies. Doctrine was not touched by these disputes. Thanks to a Confession the state church adopted in 1561, the Church of Scotland became emphatically Reformed in worship, doctrine, and structure.

Meanwhile, the way of preaching known as the "practical divinity" was flourishing. As a reminder, the adjective "practical" signaled the difference between faith or doctrine in the abstract and faith as lived, or "experimental." To the many people in early modern Britain who assumed that "because they are baptized and live in the church . . . they are in God's favour," the Elizabethan theologian William Perkins (d. 1599) retorted that they "never knew what sin was" and consequently were "never yet reconciled to God."⁵ Judgmental of sinners and sinning in much of its texture, the practical divinity was designed to awaken sinners to their plight and propel them to repent. For its makers, it was also about the gospel promise of unmerited grace made possible by the death of Christ on the cross. "Evangelical" in the root sense of spreading the good news of salvation by "free" grace alone, the practical divinity was forcefully disciplining in its emphasis on "sanctification," or being righteous in everyday life.

Some historians of the practical divinity push its origins back to the 1540s and 1550s, and others date its emergence to the 1590s. The case for an earlier date depends in the main on the devotional practices of the Marian martyrs, especially those of John Bradford (d. 1555). On one point, however, all agree: within the family of Reformed churches, this mode of preaching originated in England and, via an abundance of translations, was transmitted in the seventeenth century to the Dutch, French, German, and Swiss Reformed churches. Another much-disputed question is whether the practical divinity adhered to "Calvinist" principles or headed in new directions, a question entangled in debates about the "real"

⁵ William Perkins, *The Foundation of Christian Religion Gathered into Six Principles* (1590), sig. A2-r-v.

Calvin (were his teachings modified by “Calvinists” who came after him?) and debates, as well, about how to interpret the idiom of “covenant” that, by 1600, was becoming widespread in England and Scotland. What is often overlooked is that both Calvin and his heirs asserted that God “accommodated” himself to humankind by working through a ministry of the Word. Thus, practical divinity, as preached and lived, was integral to the literature and experience of puritanism.

In any inventory of doctrines inherited from the Reformed tradition and favored by the puritans, predestination usually tops the list. That can be a bit misleading. A more informed inventory would replace predestination with the concept of a “golden chain” or divine order by which God communicated His grand plan of salvation to humankind. At one end of the golden chain was eternity or creation, when God had “elected” some to salvation and condemned others as reprobates. In between lay a series of steps or stages detailing how the gospel promise was “applied” to sinners, stages such as humiliation, repentance, the “effectual call,” faith, justification, and sanctification. Again, it was the theologian William Perkins – one of the most widely read and influential writers of the day (his works outsold Shakespeare) – who described this chain the best. In *A Golden Chaine* (1591 in English), Perkins explained that God entrusted the “actual” work of redemption to “means of grace.” These various “means” were God’s way of accommodating himself to human need, and the chief way God did so was through the preaching of the Word. Ministers who fashioned the practical divinity insisted in their sermons that sinners must submit to “the law,” using it as a “mirror” to reveal their worthlessness in the eyes of God. Finding themselves “under the law” would then enable sinners to repent, and in turn this repentance would prepare them to receive or act on the gospel promise.⁶

By focusing on the means of grace – on God’s lifelong process of accommodation – puritan studies has shifted its sense of what mattered most in the lived religion of actual puritans. In recent studies of the practical divinity by such scholars as Alec Ryrie and Baird Tipson, for example, the term “conversion” disappears. The reasons for eliminating it are two: first, to counter the tendency of some to read back into the early modern period the crisis or conversion-centered evangelism of the

⁶ For more on the theology of this chain and the literature it produced, see Lisa Gordis’s chapter on theology (Chapter 7) in this volume. William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine, or the Description of Theologie, Containing the Order of the Causes of Salvation and Damnation* (London, 1591). See Ian Breward, ed., *The Work of William Perkins* (Abingdon: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970).

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, second, to correct for the damage this model does to what was being said by the makers of the practical divinity. For them, conversion or redemption was a lifelong process marked by ups and downs, a pilgrim's pathway that included many moments of suffering as well as others of joy. Often, this process was characterized as originating in "weak faith" and progressing to something more robust. Decentering conversion has enabled Ryrie and others to restore devotion to center stage, devotion understood as practices or rituals the godly pursued to renew or strengthen their faith. These included prayer, meditation, "thinking on death," listening to sermons, keeping a journal, participating in fasts, small-group meetings, and the like – in short, a life of unrelenting "watchfulness" producing, and resulting from, several literary practices. This was how the mid-seventeenth-century London furniture maker Nehemiah Wallington organized his daily life and how countless others aspired to live – the layman and future colonist John Winthrop, for one, who wrote in a journal he was keeping in the 1620s, "It is wonderfull, how the omission of the leaste dutie, or commission of evill, will quench grace and estrange us from the love of God."⁷ Winthrop's sisters and wives were as devout as he was, and some pious women were beginning to write devotional poetry and keep journals, some of which began appearing in print.

Because the identity of the "elect" (those who were predestined to salvation) was known only to God, ministers could exhort everyone to prepare themselves for the promise and strive for righteousness as sanctified beings. "Sloth" was unacceptable. Along the way, the "plain mans pathway to salvation" was full of twists and turns, the most significant of them self-deception or hypocrisy. Self-deception and, almost as bad, an outward show of godliness were a principal theme of Perkins's *A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration Whether a Man Be in the Estate of Damnation, or in the Estate of Grace* (1588), from which readers learned that "a reprobate might (in appearance) attain to as much as" the true saint.⁸ He made the same point in *A Golden Chaine* when he described "men . . . who, outwardly professing the faith, are charitably reputed . . . true members" of the church, but in fact were "deceiving . . . themselves."⁹ Hence the imperative of using "terror" to awaken people to the fate that

⁷ John Winthrop, "Experiencia," February 2, 1606, in *The Winthrop Papers*, vol. 1 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929), 162.

⁸ William Perkins, *A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration Whether a Man Be in the Estate of Damnation, or in the Estate of Grace* (London, 1588), title page.

⁹ Breward, ed., *The Work of William Perkins*, 236.

awaited them as sinners and to bring them to accept that their good works were meaningless in God's sight. Salvation was truly by "grace alone," but salvation as a lifelong journey was an unrelenting process of self-examination, repentance, and ever greater righteousness.

The practical divinity was close cousin to one other strand of British puritanism, the high hopes many felt for transforming a disorderly, amoral society into the sanctified kingdom of Christ. The name for this process was a "reformation of manners," a phrase that came into use in the second half of the sixteenth century. Its starting point was the widely shared perception that moral and social behavior was becoming worse rather than better, as evidenced by Sabbath-breaking, tavern-haunting, births out of wedlock, covetousness, witchcraft, cursing, and idleness. All of these violated the federal or "national" covenant between God and British Protestants, a covenant committing them to strict observance of the Ten Commandments, the laws described elsewhere in Leviticus (for example, making adultery a capital crime), and the moral life that St. Paul described in various of his letters. Given the near-universal principle that moral and social order rested on an ethos of obedience, puritan moralizers extolled social hierarchy and the well-ordered family, or "little commonwealth," in which children learned to obey their parents and wives their husbands.

Flowing from their ideal of a properly ordered social hierarchy, puritans also extolled the figure of the Christian prince as a latter-day Josiah, the seventh-century BCE king who purged his country of idols. Good kings should devote themselves to the common good or "common weal." Again, law-centered, evangelical preaching was seen as possibly the most effective means to the end of a sanctified society. As was pointed out in the *English Homilies* (1562, 1571), sermons were "the principal guide and leader unto al godlinesse and virtue" and the means by which "the people . . . may . . . learne their duety towards God, their prince, and their neighbours."¹⁰ Law-centered preaching worked because it made listeners accountable for their faults and summoned them to repent. In Scotland and, to a lesser extent, in England, assumptions about covenant and repentance prompted godly ministers and their political allies to organize fast days and ceremonies of covenant renewal, a ritual the Church of Scotland used as a means of criticizing Mary Stuart and James VI. In England, local programs of "civic godliness" addressed – sometimes in remarkably progressive ways – the situation of the poor and illiterate. Thus, a rich, complex background

¹⁰ Walter H. Frere, ed., *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation*, 3 vols. (London, 1910), 3: 82.

of social and political reformation lay behind the American puritans and continued to influence and engage them through the years.

In addition, a complex background of theological articulation shaped puritanism on both sides of the Atlantic. Doctrinal statements of a formal kind lurked on the edges of the practical divinity and, much condensed, in catechisms. Hundreds of these were published in early modern Britain. Students of theological systems could consult a series of Reformed creeds and catechism-like statements, some of them brought together in *An Harmonie of the Confessions of the Faith of the Christian and Reformed Churches* (1586; reprinted, 1644). Defending Protestant orthodoxy against its Catholic critics was an ongoing challenge that produced its own enormous literature. By 1600 another challenge was to repel what became known as “Arminianism,” named for the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (d. 1609), who amplified the role of human freedom in the golden chain. The makers of the Irish Articles (1615) were at pains to reiterate classic Reformed doctrine of a kind not present in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. In turn, the Irish Articles influenced the makers of the last great Reformed creed, the Westminster Confession of 1647.

The Confession was drafted at a critical moment in the history of the puritan movement. In the decades leading up to the 1640s, the situation of the godly remained precarious. Near the end of his long life, James VI (who became James I when he succeeded Elizabeth as England’s monarch in 1603) returned to his native Scotland in 1617 and told the bishops (whose office he had reintroduced in the state church by 1610) that they must endorse five aspects of worship the Kirk had discarded in the early moments of the Reformation. The most tendentious of these was the obligation to kneel when receiving the bread and the wine administered at Holy Communion, a practice the Reformed had rejected. When the bishops dragged their feet, James threatened to enact the five articles himself. In the event, the five articles were adopted by a special synod the next year, although a substantial number of dissidents voted no. For the first time in Protestant Scotland, nonconformity – lay people avoiding Holy Communion and preferring to worship in private groups – emerged.

James also added his voice to the rhetoric known to historians as “anti-puritanism.” As noted earlier in this chapter, the 1560s saw the emergence of the term “puritan” as a synonym for political opposition to the monarchy: the puritan as seditious. James VI reiterated this anti-puritanism in *Basilikon Doron* (1599). Thereafter it became a staple of religious politics in both countries, although especially in England, where it appealed to a

faction of ministers who preferred a more “Catholic” version of Protestantism to one with close ties to the Reformed. The leading members of this faction were Catholic-tilting (although never actually Catholic) in the sense of extolling the importance of Holy Communion and downplaying sermons as a means of grace. They also argued that Episcopacy (the hierarchical system of bishops) existed by divine right, and they defended the monarch’s authority in matters of religion. In the closing years of James’s reign, he favored this group, and when his son Charles became king in 1625 he did so as well. Ministers such as William Laud, who became bishop of London in 1626, gained the king’s ear, and when the office of archbishop became vacant in 1633, Charles made Laud head of the church as Archbishop of Canterbury. By this time, bishops associated with Laud (or “Laudians”) were disparaging Calvinist theology, allowing people greater freedom on Sundays and ordering local churches to move the communion table back to where altars had existed when the Church of England was Catholic. Simultaneously, the hardliners launched an attack on nonconformity. Everyone had to accept what the king preferred – a king who, by the 1630s, interpreted any religious dissent as a direct attack on his own authority.

Resistance was widespread, in part because tensions about the relationship between Parliament and the monarchy had been increasing in the 1620s. These tensions culminated in the assertion (1628–1629) that a “popish plot” was unfolding in England, a plot aimed at subverting the liberties of Parliament (and therefore of the English people as a whole) but also directed at making worship far more “Catholic” in nature. Anti-popery had already become embedded in English popular nationalism (and Scottish too), but it acquired a more immediate political significance thanks to the political theology of the Laudians and the decision of Charles I to dispense with parliaments during the period of “personal rule” (1629–1640).

This was the context that prompted some of the godly to seek an “asylum” in the Netherlands and New England. But their exodus was not England’s main concern. In fact, it is important to remember how little the American puritans mattered to most of those who remained behind. It was not the New England exodus, but rather events in Scotland that became the turning point in the politics of religion and the history of the puritan movement. In 1636, Charles I ordered the bishops in Scotland to begin using a prayer book that replicated the Book of Common Prayer. The bishops dragged their heels until the king demanded that they act. On July 23, 1637, a riot broke out in Edinburgh when the new prayer book

was used for the first time. Behind the scenes, organizers had been preparing to resist. The success of the riot (and the king's stubbornly hardline response) nurtured a rapid mobilizing of ministers, lay people, and important members of the nobility on behalf of a far-reaching agenda tied to eliminating the authority of the king in matters of religion and reaffirming, instead, the authority of general assemblies (none had met since 1618) and "free" parliaments. As well, Episcopacy was abolished and worship along Reformed lines resumed. Badly advised, Charles attempted to quell this insurgency by force, but his ill-led and disaffected soldiers were not up to the task. Instead, the Scottish army entered England in 1640, by which point the government in Scotland was entirely in the hands of the Covenanters (so named because of an oath on behalf of their radical Protestantism, the National Covenant of February 1638).

Back in London and needing money to pay off the Scottish army, the king had no choice but to summon a parliament (none had met since 1629). Once installed, the so-called Long Parliament began to curtail the king's privileges or "prerogative" and, simultaneously, to dismantle Laudian "innovations." Civil war broke out in 1642 and, fearing defeat, Parliament formed an alliance in September 1643 with the Covenanter government (the "Solemn League and Covenant") that bound the two countries to a Reformed model of worship, doctrine, and church. The task of spelling out the details was assigned to a newly authorized national synod or assembly that became known (because of the building in which it met) as the Westminster Assembly, which convened for the first time in July 1643.

The goals of the Westminster Assembly were threefold: (1) provide a blueprint for worship, which it did via a Directory of Worship (1645); (2) provide a blueprint for a post-Episcopal state church (which it did by 1646); and (3) define the contours of orthodox (i.e., Reformed) doctrine, which it did with the Westminster Confession (1647). Of these three, the first was easily accomplished, but the second became deeply contested because some in the Assembly wanted a decentered system of churches (known as "Independency" or "Congregationalism") whereas most favored the Scottish model known as "Presbyterianism." Hard-fought battles between the two sides ensued, and although the Presbyterians eventually won out, they had to accept the authority of Parliament to make final decisions about church discipline, doctrine, and the like.

On doctrine, there was also general agreement. But the context had shifted since the beginning of the new century thanks to the emergence of Arminianism in the Netherlands and, by the 1620s, in England itself. In the eyes of the orthodox, this way of understanding the order of

salvation compromised the doctrines of predestination and the perseverance of the saints (once elected, always elected). Meanwhile the Assembly was contending with two other challenges. One of these was Socinianism (named after an Italian Protestant who fled to Poland in the late sixteenth century), which altered the meaning of the Trinity by demoting the status of Christ and interpreting his mission as merely ethical. Moreover, Socinians endorsed a strong role for “reason” in deciding matters of biblical interpretation or theology. The other was nicknamed “Antinomianism,” which went to the other extreme by emphasizing the importance of the Holy Spirit and human passivity, doing so in direct opposition to the “golden chain” and its emphasis on repentance before faith.

In response, the Confession reaffirmed the absolute sovereignty of God against the Arminians and the imperative of repentance and the role of ministry as “means” against the Antinomians. With Baptists in mind (small groups had begun to emerge in England by the 1630s), the Confession also insisted that the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament were really one and the same, although the salvific Messiah/Christ in the Hebrew Bible did not become fully revealed until the times of Jesus and the Crucifixion. Continuity enabled ministers to connect “types” of Christ in the Old Testament with “antitypes” in the New. It was also possible to relate Old and New Testaments via analogy and example.

Outside the walls of the Westminster Assembly, however, confusion reigned in the mid-1640s. As is true when wars become prolonged (conflict between the king and Parliament closed with victory by parliamentary troops in 1646), the English conflict had unexpected consequences. State censorship of the press collapsed as of 1641, as did state-led prosecutions for blasphemy and heresy. As reported by wide-eyed “heresiographers,” chief among them the English Presbyterian Thomas Edwards, who filled his massive *Gangraena* (1646) with eyewitness reports of tub-preachers and heretical texts, London was suddenly awash in “sectaries” of a bewildering variety, all of them disputing theological orthodoxy and challenging the model of a ministry-magistracy alliance and inclusive state church that Reformed Protestants had taken for granted. To Edwards, the world had truly turned upside down – women preaching openly, learned ministers displaced, and people quitting parish churches for new ones of their own devising.¹¹

These “sectaries” (as they were labeled) did not come out of the blue. Their immediate ancestors were Separatists of the late sixteenth and early

¹¹ Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena; or, A Catalogue and Discovery of Many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of This Time* (London, 1646).

seventeenth centuries who had used the criterion of lawfulness to justify leaving the state church. They also emerged from Foxe's concept of the church of the faithful few, a concept of deep significance to many within the movement even though it clashed with the principle of the visible church as means of grace to everyone. Others, meanwhile, owed their radicalism to the concept of the Holy Spirit as a dynamic force that could overturn not only personal sin but "tyranny" of all kinds, including the tyranny associated with learnedness. Another source was an apocalypticism (or "millennialism") that flourished after 1640, rooted in the musings of the English minister Thomas Brightman (d. 1609) and many others about the imminent conversion of the Jews, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and Christ's return in judgment.¹² In the 1630s and 1640s, this way of thinking ripened into an understanding of sacred history as a sequence of dispensations: the purity of apostolic times, followed by a descent into darkness, followed by the return of the Holy Spirit and a "new light" that was liberating the worthy few from the coercive authority of a state church and learned ministry. Themes of this kind explain why "illiterate" men and women were asserting a role as prophets after hearing a voice from heaven or claiming to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Eventually, the turmoil subsided, but not before several alternatives to a Presbyterian state church emerged, chiefly Baptists (who differed among themselves about doctrine) and, by the early 1650s, Quakers, or "Friends," the latest to emerge and the most contentious because of their practice of invading parish churches and denouncing ordained ministers of all kinds. Another unexpected consequence of this turmoil was an insistence on toleration or liberty of conscience. Advocates of toleration and/or liberty of conscience defined each of these in several different ways; toleration presumed a continuing role for the state, which would now make room for other groups alongside a state church, whereas a strong version of liberty of conscience omitted any serious role for the state in curtailing what people said. Endorsed by many within the "New Model" army that Parliament had organized to defeat the king – and endorsed, as well, by writers such as John Milton – toleration and/or liberty of conscience were favored by Oliver Cromwell, who became head of state in 1649 in the aftermath of the execution of Charles I in January 1649. Cromwell refused to enforce a law prohibiting blasphemy (1650), although he was critical of the Quakers and unwilling to allow Catholics and those loyal to Episcopacy to worship

¹² For more on millennialism as a form of puritan literature – and how to understand it – see Christopher Trigg's Chapter 16 in this volume.

openly. Still another consequence of the emergence of the “sectaries” was a second phase of civil war (1648), this time between Scotland and England. These former allies parted ways when it became clear that the Westminster Assembly was not being allowed to enforce Presbyterian-style uniformity in England and that the English Parliament was tilting toward toleration. Subsequently, when the Covenanter government in Scotland recognized Charles II as their rightful king after the execution of his father, Cromwell-led armies crushed the Scots in 1650 and again in 1651. Presbyterianism as a state-endorsed system disappeared in Scotland, not to be reborn until William III permitted it to return in 1689.

Cromwell died in 1658 and, in 1660, Charles II was welcomed home from Europe, where he had lived in exile. Rules enforcing conformity and the Book of Common Prayer returned with a vengeance. Hundreds of godly ministers refused to accept these rules, as did thousands of laypeople. The dream of taking over the state church came to an end. Yet puritanism as a culture had sunk deep roots in British soil, roots that sustained Dissent into the eighteenth century and beyond. The English minister Richard Baxter helped fashion a middle way of sorts in the post-1660 period, urging his fellow puritans to put aside their differences while simultaneously advancing a softer version of Westminster-style doctrine that downplayed the importance of creeds and reemphasized piety (although Baxter always insisted that he was orthodox on key points).

All of these events, conflicts, theological disputes, political battles, and social movements had consequences for the puritans who came to America. Many came because of them. Others left America to join in the wars that broke out in the 1640s. Some wrote with an eye toward influencing the decisions of Parliament. Others attempted to mute conflicts in New England so that Parliament would never learn of them, presenting themselves as unblemished to an English audience in order to urge the New England style of church and state abroad. Whatever the case, it is vital to remember that there is no American puritanism and no American puritan literature without the contentions of puritanism that roiled through England and Scotland from the mid-sixteenth century through the end of the seventeenth. Each phase of the movement in Britain affected puritanism and its literature in America. Late in life, for example, Richard Baxter’s wide influence became apparent in the policies of Increase and Cotton Mather in New England – and in how orthodoxy was understood for another generation on both sides of the Atlantic. From one generation to the next, the place of puritanism in America came shaped by its connection to developments abroad.

CHAPTER 3

Europe

Jan Stievermann

"I Write the WONDERS of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, flying from the depravations of Europe, to the American Strand." Countless times this opening line of Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) has been cited as shorthand for the imagined intention of New England's first church history: to mark the break with a doomed Old World and hold up the achievements and millennial promises of God's new American founding to a backsliding generation.¹ Thus the *Magnalia* was interpreted as something of an early patriotic epic and an emblematic work of New England puritan writing. Readings of this kind have their roots in nineteenth-century cultural nationalism but became canonized – often with critical inflections – through the institutionalization of American studies. Due in no small part to the formidable influence of Perry Miller, Alan Heimert, and Sacvan Bercovitch, the project of puritan literature appeared to many as having been quintessentially about the expression of American distinctiveness and its contributions to national ideology.² This project was thought to have culminated in the generation after Mather, as puritanism crumbled and the so-called Great Awakening arose. What Jonathan Edwards and other revivalists most importantly bequeathed to their (post-)revolutionary heirs was, according to this view, an Americanized version of Christian eschatology, in which sacred and secular history were collapsed into a vision of this-worldly progress, reaching its apex in the New World with the United States rendered a redeemer nation.

¹ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, The Ecclesiastical History of New England*, 2 vols. (London, 1702), vol. 1, "General Introduction," n.p.

² See the Prologue for more on these figures and their work. For Perry Miller, see among, many other works, his *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953); for Sacvan Bercovitch, see *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); for Alan Heimert, see *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966).

Already in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the “puritan origins of the American self”-paradigm was in full ascendancy, some scholars challenged such interpretations. They emphasized that puritan theology and religious culture developed in close conversation with like-minded Protestants in Europe, exhibiting little that could legitimately be called exceptionalist tendencies. For instance, in an intellectual biography of Mather that was trying to do justice for the first time to the multiplicity and complexity of international conversations and influences bearing on this archetypical puritan’s thought, Kenneth Silverman pointedly argued that the rest of the *Magnalia*’s introduction read like a qualification of its opening paragraph.³ Aimed primarily at a European audience, the book reflected the kind of British provincial identity that had typically come to replace the founding generation’s sense of being Englishmen in exile. This identity, however, was embedded in a sense of belonging both to a larger community of committed Protestants and to an international republic of letters.

Over the past thirty years, revisionist scholarship has continued to correct the old view of puritan culture and literature as an inward-looking and self-contained affair whose main significance lay in foreshadowing the rise of the United States. Much of this scholarship has focused on how New Englanders were tied into British Dissenting networks and how their (ecclesial) politics, theology, and social, and intellectual life developed in connection with the three kingdoms, and then, after 1688, within an increasingly integrated Empire.⁴ Others have demonstrated that New England puritans were from the beginning influenced by Continental churches and trends, and since the late seventeenth century coevolved in exchange with Protestant renewal movements, notably, the Dutch *nadere reformatie* and German-speaking Pietism.⁵

The aim of this chapter is to survey and exemplify what we have learned of these Continental-European connections. In doing so, it will also pay attention to how these relations were often triangulated with Britain. Three aspects will be treated in summary overview but always with special

³ Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 158–162.

⁴ Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and Francis J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610–1692* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994).

⁵ William R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

reference to the works of Cotton Mather: (1) the general perception of Europe; in particular, how puritans looked at the varieties of European Protestantism and through that lens at themselves; (2) the networks and collaborations on mission, reform, and revival between New Englanders and groups on the Continent; and (3) the many theological and intellectual exchanges that took place through these networks.

The Perception of Europe

When New Englanders thought of the Old World across the ocean, England, Scotland, Ireland, and later on Great Britain naturally served as the primary points of reference. Recent studies have emphasized that across the generational changes from English colonists to American colonials, puritans first and foremost understood their communities as extensions of Anglo-Protestant culture. Reflecting their conflicted relation with the English national church, they imagined the nature of that transoceanic extension in different, often contradictory, ways, ranging from diasporic safe haven to spearhead and model of reform to minor side branch in danger of withering away.⁶ Yet New Englanders always partook in that Anglo-Protestant sense of being a people and a church apart from Continental Europe, set aside by God for a special mission. At the same time, they also saw themselves as heirs of a larger European civilization and history, something of which they became acutely aware in contact and conflict with what they described as the “howling wildness” of America and its native inhabitants. More particularly, they viewed themselves as part of the longer history of the Reformation as well as the international cause of Protestantism locked in a life-and-death struggle with its Catholic foes.

English and Scottish Protestants in the seventeenth century were not only very aware of their European roots but continued to cultivate close relations to Reformed territories on the Continent. Although the pre-Laudian Church of England also acknowledged its fellowship with sister churches abroad, it was the puritans in particular who looked to them as counter-influences and models for completing the national reformation.⁷ Like their colleagues at home, clergymen in Massachusetts or Connecticut

⁶ Joseph A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

⁷ Anthony Milton, “Puritanism and the Continental Reformed Churches,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 109–126.

continued to feel a special bond with Geneva, Zurich, and Heidelberg in the Palatinate, once the leading German Reformed territory in the southwest of the Empire with close ties to England, which, however, was devastated during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). Puritans on both sides of the Atlantic also had a special care for their Reformed brethren in France and, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the Huguenot diaspora.

The most important European connections, however, were those to the Netherlands, which in the early seventeenth century provided shelter to many puritans, not just the Separatists who would go on to found Plymouth Plantation in 1620. After the Thirty Years' War, the Dutch Republic became the new leading power of Reformed Protestantism on the Continent: wealthy, engaged across the globe in colonial ventures, and home to some of the best universities. When William of Orange, stadtholder of the United Provinces, ascended the English throne in 1689, the puritan colonies rejoiced. The Glorious Revolution not only overthrew the hated Dominion of New England government but also secured a Protestant succession in the homeland and tied England to a Reformed ally, which would emerge as the new champion in the fight against Catholicism in Europe.

This goes to show that via England and Britain, the fate of the New England colonies was chained to European dynamics, over which they had no control but which threatened to pull them in one or the other direction at any moment. New Englanders had a very acute sense that their very existence might be in the balance when thousands of miles away royal matches were made, armies clashed, and peace treaties were signed, in which colonies could be bargained away with a stroke of the pen. This is still an often-overlooked reality by scholars who have habitually told the story of American puritanism around domestic events in New England, such as the Antinomian and witchcraft crises, or the Halfway Covenant. Both English revolutions as well as the Hanoverian succession of 1714 (in which, following the 1701 Act of Settlement, George I of the house of Hanover ascended the throne, permanently securing Protestant rule over Great Britain) were informed by European dynastic and confessional power politics. Each of these events deeply affected the politico-ecclesial situation in New England. Moreover, throughout the colonial period, England was engaged in an almost uninterrupted series of major wars that involved complicated and shifting alliances. These wars either were centered on the Continent or had important causes and theaters there. Inevitably, there were ripple effects in the New World. By whatever pieces

of information they could garner, people in Boston or New Haven monitored the news about these conflicts in a constant rollercoaster ride of anxiety and hope.

The intensity of these feelings also had to do with how puritans interpreted political events through an apocalyptic framework. Europe was the principal battleground in what was widely believed to be the final period of history before the millennium. Christian princes were not just fighting the Ottoman Turks and Protestants were not just competing with their Catholic rivals over territories and resources. It was Christ's church militant facing the forces of the Antichrist. What we describe as the age of the great "wars of religion," puritans and their European coreligionists took to be signs of the end times.

Just as the first New England colonies were founded, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation descended into the Thirty Years' War when in 1618 Frederic V, Prince-Elector of the Palatinate (recently married to Elizabeth Stuart) accepted the crown of Bohemia from the Protestant estates of that kingdom, challenging the rule of the Catholic Habsburgs. The resulting conflict quickly escalated into an all-out war between the confessional parties within the Empire and then also the neighboring powers, including Sweden, Denmark, Spain, and France.⁸ When the Peace of Westphalia brought the fighting to a close in 1648, more than six million people had lost their lives. Puritans on both sides of the Atlantic unsuccessfully clamored for English expeditions in support of the Palatinate and the increasingly embattled Protestant camp in the Empire. They heard with horror of the Popish atrocities and large-scale devastations of Protestant territories – and yet no end in sight. On the contrary, in the post-1648 era, counter-reformation forces appeared on the offensive in Central and Eastern Europe even as the post-Restoration Stuarts veered toward tyranny and popery. Soon a formidable new foe raised its head. For more than a century, Anglo-Protestants had looked at the Habsburgs, especially the Spanish Habsburg Empire, as their main enemy. Now Bourbon France ascended to the position of leading "Popish" power, which under Louis XIV once again persecuted its Protestant minority and pursued an expansionist policy on the Continent as well as in North

⁸ For a good introduction, see Ronald G. Asch, *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe 1618–48* (London: Palgrave, 1997).

America. Here New England felt increasingly surrounded by French colonial activities.⁹

Under the rule of William and Mary (1689–1702), followed by that of Queen Anne (1702–1714), New England became drawn into two major international wars against France – the War of the Great Alliance (1689–1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) – which entailed bloody Indian raids and militia counterattacks. With the Hanoverian kings, the European entanglements of the British colonies only thickened. Involving Britain and France as well as Spain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, the series of conflicts collectively known in America as the French and Indian Wars (1744–1748 and 1755–1763) were really transoceanic offshoots of struggles over European hegemony, which, however, continued to have a strong confessional dimension. Colonial ministers celebrated the 1763 Protestant victory over France not just as the removal of a threat at their door but as a major blow to the apocalyptic Beast. At that point, the colonies, through decades of warfare, fear, and chanting the mantras of anti-papery and Anglo-Protestant liberty, had become more integrated in the British imperial system and more closely bound to Europe than ever before. Most New Englanders would have seen themselves as loyal provincial subjects of an Empire that they proudly hailed as the rising leader of the Protestant international interest.¹⁰

Overall, the place of Europe in the puritan imaginary appears deeply ambiguous. It was the place where much of the history of the church had played out and where it would be decided. America was only marginal to that cosmic drama. As such, Europe was a place of terrible devastation, wars, famines, plagues, and fearful corruptions, as God allowed Antichrist to rage with full strength before his final collapse. In the eyes of pious New Englanders, these corruptions were not confined to Catholicism but also extended into many Protestant state churches, including that of England. European cultural refinement, its palaces, academies, and universities were viewed with mixed feelings that included religiously informed criticism as much as a sense of provincial envy and inferiority. At the same time, New England puritans had their hopes riding on Europe's leading Protestant nations, admired its centers of godly learning, and recognized in them

⁹ See Owen Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed: English America in the Age of the Glorious Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

¹⁰ See, for example, Thomas S. Kidd, *The Protestant Interest: New England after Puritanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

many of the most exemplary Christians of the age as well as many allies in the common cause to complete the Reformation.

Networks and Collaborations

Despite its geographical remoteness, New England's elite was much more plugged into European networks and involved with various reform initiatives than conventionally assumed. For the first generation this came most naturally, as many of its leading ministers had spent time on the Continent as either exiles or students. The experiences and friendships they made there would often be formative for their entire careers. With its famed universities and at least twenty-five state-recognized but semi-independent British Reformed churches, the Netherlands were a virtual magnet for puritans in the early seventeenth century. Most famously, the great theologian William Ames spent the last two decades of his life in the Netherlands, but among the many other temporary exiles we find a number of names that went down in New England history, including Hugh Peter, John Davenport, and Thomas Hooker.¹¹ Nathaniel Ward, to cite just one example from the Palatinate, studied in Heidelberg with David Pareus and likely would not have written the *Massachusetts Body of Civil Liberties* (1641) the way he did without the theological and legal influences of that teacher. Inversely, Continental students or refugees spent time in England with puritans who would later emigrate to the New World. During his years in Boston, Lincolnshire, John Cotton ran a household seminary, in which he also tutored students from the Continent. These students enlarged an already wide-ranging network of correspondence. Through Maximilian Teellinck, for example, Cotton came into contact with the father, Willem Teellinck, the renowned Middleburg pastor, who is widely considered to be one of the principal mediators of Anglo-puritan "practical divinity" to the Continent and one of the originators of the *nadere reformatie*.¹² Cotton's teaching and writings also contributed to the growth of German Reformed Pietism. After his return from Dutch exile, the Palatine minister Peter Streithagen undertook two major translation projects. Both were published posthumously, went through several editions, and are thought to be the first German Reformed

¹¹ See Keith L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1982).

¹² Sargent Bush, Jr., ed., *The Correspondence of John Cotton* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 133–134.

texts laying out something like a morphology of conversion in the framework of experiential predestinarianism. One was an anthology of diverse works of puritan practical divinity printed under the title *Homo novus* (1658); the other was John Cotton's compendious description of the salvation process *The Way of Life* (1642), which first appeared in Heidelberg in 1662 as *Weg deß Lebens*.

Other founders, too, belonged to networks of correspondence and friendship that, often indirectly, associated them with radical Protestants across Western and Central Europe. Important to mention here is the circle that existed from c. 1630 to 1660 around Samuel Hartlib, a Prussian-born, London-based intelligencer. In close cooperation with the itinerant Scotsman John Dury, Hartlib worked to reconcile the Protestants churches and reform society by mutual support and exchange of ideas and knowledge. Besides such luminaries as the great Moravian theologian and educator John Amos Comenius and Henry Oldenbourg, first secretary of the Royal Society, the "Hartlib Circle" comprised several future émigrés, notably John Davenport, John Winthrop, Jr., and, more remotely, John Eliot.¹³

With the second generation such personal contacts naturally became much rarer. There was little immigration to the New England colonies from Continental Europe. And if New England divines did make the trip back across the ocean, it was almost always to England, where some still cultivated clerical friendships among Dissenters. Yet the dialogue with European colleagues continued, even if it was now mostly conducted through the exchanges of publications and, in some cases, letters with people they would never meet but often identified with more closely than with most other Englishmen. This had much to do with puritan theology and ecclesiology.

Far from being isolated tribalists, as earlier American scholars painted them, puritans conceived of Christ's true church as a transatlantic and indeed transhistorical community of saints. It stretched from the Jewish prophets and Patriarchs to the early Christian martyrs and many model saints of the medieval age to the committed members in churches of the Reformation. Although puritans saw differences between how truly reformed these churches were, they were never ardent confessionalists,

¹³ See Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie, and Timothy Raylor, eds., *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606–1676* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

that is, narrowly prescribing and enforcing one particular creed or orthodox set of beliefs and practices linked to one particular form of church. There was a cross-confessional, even irenic strain in their piety from the beginning. This did not keep them from establishing their unique church-state model and suppressing those deemed outside the boundaries of bible-based Christianity. Congregationalism, in their eyes, certainly was the most scriptural form of church governance. However, what really mattered *sub specie aeternitatis* was the individual's saving faith, growing from an experience of God's grace that was unconditional and not bound up with outer forms. Hence, from the beginning there was a widespread willingness to overlook minor differences and join hands with everyone perceived as a regenerate Protestant.

Indeed, the central reform project that first- and second-generation puritans were in conversation about with their European contacts (and one for which they hoped the New England Way could serve as a helpful model) was the unification and renewal of Protestant churches in anticipation of the millennium. This unification and renewal, they hoped, would happen through a reorientation toward the purity of the early church and a growth in practical piety among all parties. Hopes for the latter-day triumph of the church also inspired the exchanges about missions that New England ministers conducted not only with supporters in the old home but also on the Continent. There was a sense that Protestantism had woefully fallen behind in the now global competition with Catholicism over "heathen souls," allowing it to spread an adulterated gospel in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Most millennial Protestants believed that Christ's reign would be preceded by a national conversion of the Jews and an expansion of his church among Indigenous peoples outside Europe. With its colonies in the East and West Indies as well as Africa, the Netherlands took a leading role in the Protestant missionary awakening, yet New England also made significant contributions. Offering practical experiences in cross-cultural theology and speculations about the Indians being the Ten Lost Tribes, the reports about John Eliot's "praying towns" of converted Indians and Experience Mayhew's missions on the coastal islands all drew some attention in Europe. Ironically, interest intensified just as King Philip's War (1675–1678) had destroyed many of these missions, but second- and third-generation puritans still advocated their success abroad. Originating from an epistolary exchange about missions with the Reformed theologian Johannes Leusden at Utrecht, Increase Mather published a book on North America mission efforts first in 1688 and then in an expanded edition that contained Leusden's report

on the Dutch missionary efforts in the “East Indies.” The expanded edition was then translated into German and published in Halle in 1696.¹⁴

This publishing event is indicative of two trends. First, at the same time that American Congregationalists settled into their new identity as British Dissenters after 1688/89, their internationalism also became even more expansive and intense. By the early decades of the eighteenth century, the leading New England ministers belonged to the vanguard of a revivalist, missionary-oriented pan-Protestantism, sometimes referred to by with the label “early evangelicalism.” This associated them with other like-minded Dissenters, low-church Anglicans, as well as Dutch advocates of a further Reformation and German Pietists. Second, with the university of Halle (then part of the Prussian-ruled Duchy of Magdeburg, now in Saxony-Anhalt) and the adjacent Francke Foundations, Prussian Lutheran Pietism developed a much-admired center of reformist activities that had close links with Britain and its colonies. Built from scratch by the entrepreneurial Pietist theologian August Hermann Francke, the Foundations’ religious schools, orphanage, publications, and missionary enterprises inspired early evangelicals of all stripes, from John Wesley and George Whitefield to Jonathan Edwards.¹⁵ But the first to enter into dialogue with Halle was Cotton Mather.

From roughly 1710 to the end of his life, Mather exchanged letters and publications with Francke, his associate Anton Wilhelm Böhme, and even the Halle-trained pastors at the Danish mission in Tranquebar, South India.¹⁶ As chaplain to Prince George in London, Böhme served as an important go-between, who organized English support for the Francke Foundations and its missionary projects and made available key works of Halle Pietism and its spiritual forbears, notably *Of True Christianity Four Books* (1712–1714) by Johann Arndt, one of the founding fathers of Lutheran Pietism. Mather became an avid reader of these works and Böhme’s own publications. The appreciation was mutual, and by 1721, a Halle bibliography listed eighty-three of his works that were held in the library there. The Germans took a special interest in his works on practical

¹⁴ *De Successu Evangelii Apud Indos Occidentales, In Novâ Anglia, Epistola ad Johannem Leusdenum* 1688 (Utrecht, 1699). German: *Ein Brieff von dem glücklichen Fortgang des Evangelii bey den West-Indianern in Neu-Engeland an den berühmten Herrn Johann Leusden* (Halle, 1696).

¹⁵ See Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

¹⁶ Oliver Scheiding, “The World as Parish: Cotton Mather, August Hermann Francke, and Transatlantic Religious Networks,” in *Cotton Mather and Biblia Americana – America’s First Bible Commentary: Essays in Reappraisal*, ed. Reiner Smolinski and Jan Stievermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 131–167.

divinity and the accounts of New England missions contained in, for instance, his *Magnalia* or *India Christiana* (1721), as well as the peculiarities of the New England Way. The letters contain fascinating conversations on how to improve ministerial training (Mather saw Halle as a model for the reform of Harvard and the new Yale College) and unite Protestantism under a few maxims of experimental piety.¹⁷ So strong was the affinity Mather felt with Halle that he famously spoke in a 1716 letter to Böhme about his “American Puritanism” as being “so much of a Peece with the Frederician Pietism” – alluding to the Prussian king and sponsor of Halle, Frederic I.¹⁸

After the death of Cotton Mather and August Hermann Francke, their sons Samuel and Gotthilf August continued the exchange for a few years, and also collaborated on a Latin biography of the elder Francke (1733),¹⁹ while a decade later a German translation of Samuel’s life of Cotton Mather appeared under Halle auspices.²⁰ Even after the demise of the Mather–Francke network, New England evangelicals and Prussian Pietists continued to be interested in each other, trading devotional literature as well as reports about revivals and missions around the world. Thus, Jonathan Edwards greeted news about Halle-sponsored activities and studied the writings of German Lutheran Pietism.

American revivalists cherished the emotional and conversion-centered piety of the Halle school. But most of all they were impressed by the innovative models of practical Christianity it provided. Inversely, German Pietists were excited about the spread of evangelical Christianity in the “wilderness” of the New World and reports about the colonial missions and revivals in their journals. An associate of the younger Francke, Johann Adam Steinmetz, undertook the translations of several New England works, including Mather’s *The Life of John Eliot* from the *Magnalia*, and Jonathan Edwards’s *Faithful Narrative* (1737) and *Life of David Brainerd* (1749). For both sides, then, these relations contributed to a change in self-understanding, as they began to perceive themselves as part of a larger, international community of awakened Protestants engaged

¹⁷ See Richard Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1979); and Kenneth P. Minkema, “Reforming Harvard: Cotton Mather on Education at Cambridge,” *New England Quarterly* 87.2 (2014): 319–340.

¹⁸ Cotton Mather, *The Diary of Cotton Mather*, ed. W. C. Ford, 2 vols., Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 7th ser., vols. 7 and 8 (Boston, 1911–1912), 2: 411.

¹⁹ *Vita B. Augusti Hermannii Franckii* (Boston, 1733).

²⁰ Samuel Mather, *The Life of the Very Reverend and Learned Cotton Mather, D.D. & F.R.S* (Boston, 1729). The German translation appeared in the Pietist journal *Nützliche Beyträge zur Theologia Pastoralis Practica* (Magdeburg and Leipzig) 1 (1746): 1–112.

in a latter-day contest with Catholicism and a common mission to evangelize the world.²¹

Theological and Intellectual Exchanges

The formation of New England ministers, like all Protestant theologians of their period, began with an education in the *artes liberales* and its classical canon, as attested to by the curricula and library catalogues of Harvard and later Yale College and also the mandatory Latin prep schools. From the beginning, American divinity was in dialogue with the full breadth of European intellectual traditions, but in particular with those that were also prevalent among their closest coreligionists across the Atlantic. These included Ramism, so central for Reformed thinkers everywhere, as well as the new scientific empiricism.²² Since around the turn of the eighteenth century, educated colonials increasingly responded to further trends associated with the Early Enlightenment, such as Cartesian rationalism, natural philosophy (the precursor of the modern sciences), and the emerging historical and textual criticism of the Bible. They did so in very different ways, however. Most embraced a conservative, self-declared Christian Enlightenment and interpreted these intellectual trends as largely affirmative of their beliefs.²³

A case in point is Cotton Mather, who penned the first American compendium of natural theology, *The Christian Philosopher* (1721). This work epitomizes a prevalent view among the learned clergy that the new scientific methods supported revealed religion by demonstrating its basic claims from the observation of nature. Moreover, Mather left a massive manuscript entitled “Biblia Americana.” When he started the project in 1693, he aspired to synthesize “the Treasures of Illustrations for the Bible, dispersed in the Volumes of this Age,” so “that all the Learning in the

²¹ See Jan Stievermann, “Faithful Translations: New Discoveries on the German Pietist Reception of Jonathan Edwards,” *Church History* 83.2 (June 2014): 323–366.

²² See Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998 [1935]); William H. Bond and Hugh Armory, *The Printed Catalogue of the Harvard College Library 1723–1790* (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 1996); David D. Hall, “Readers and Writers in Early New England,” in *A History of the Book in America: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Armory and David D. Hall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117–152; and John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning and Education, 1560–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

²³ See Raymond Phineas Stearns, *Science in the British Colonies of America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970); and Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

World might bee made gloriously subservient unto the Illustration of the Scripture.”²⁴ At his death in 1728, he had filled more than 4,500 folio pages with annotations and created America’s first comprehensive commentary on the Bible, which is only now being published. Mather’s mammoth commentary belies the stereotype of the insular puritan and serves as striking example of what Anthony Grafton called “The Republic of Letters in the American Colonies.”²⁵ It is essentially a digest of Old World learning that draws on literally hundreds of sources, ranging from the Church Fathers, Greco-Roman writers, rabbinical commentaries, medieval scholastic work, and the Reformers to the latest studies in biblical scholarship, historiography, and the natural sciences. Among the English-language authors mined by Mather, New England divines are rare, but citations from Huguenots or German Lutheran and Dutch Reformed Pietists abound. Indeed, if Mather refers to contemporary Bible scholars exemplary in their blending of erudition and piety, they are often Continental – such as the Leiden professor Hermann Witsius, whom Mather deeply admired. Also, with very few exceptions such as slavery, there is nothing particularly American about the topics, issues, or debates addressed by the “Biblia.”

One essential goal of the “Biblia” was to improve the King James Version of the Bible. To this end, Mather not only compared ancient language versions and European vernacular translations but also consulted rabbinic glosses and the latest works of academic philology. More importantly, Mather engages historical critics and skeptical thinkers who, since the mid-seventeenth century, had questioned the supernatural authority of the Bible and traditional modes of interpreting the Scriptures. With considerable depth, Mather discusses contested questions regarding the inspiration, composition, transmission, canonization, and historical realism of the biblical texts, challenges to scriptural foundation for Trinitarianism, as well as the legitimacy of reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture. Even though he sometimes modified traditional interpretations, Mather ultimately always defended the authority, integrity, and infallible truth of the Bible, in agreement with what he thought a broad consensus of Protestant orthodoxy. The “Biblia” thus pioneered a new type of learned but apologetically oriented, pietistic type of biblical

²⁴ Mather, *Diary*, 1: 169–170. See the ongoing edition *Biblia Americana: America’s First Bible Commentary. A Synoptic Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, Gen. ed. Reiner Smolinski and Jan Stievermann, 10 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010–).

²⁵ Anthony Grafton, “The Republic of Letters in the American Colonies: Francis Daniel Pastorius Makes a Notebook,” *The American Historical Review* 117.1 (2012): 1–39.

criticism that would continue to flower among New England evangelicals such as Jonathan Edwards.²⁶

Looking at New England theology proper, it was certainly always characterized by some diversity and much tension. But into Edwards's time, when more radical strands of the Enlightenment came to the colonies, a broad consensus held. This consensus was not a parochial one, though. A host of recent studies have squarely placed the theological writings of colonial puritans in the broader Reformed tradition, no longer understood as flowing from the single fountainhead of Calvin but from multiple sources in the second and third generation of Reformers, such as Martin Bucer, Heinrich Bullinger, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Zacharias Ursinus, David Pareus, Heinrich Alting, Johannes Wolleb, or Franciscus Gomarus.²⁷ These variegated sources not only went into the making of the standard works of English puritans from John Rainolds and William Perkins to William Ames and Richard Baxter. They also continued to directly inform theological training, writing, and debate in New England through the seventeenth century and beyond.

The role of Continental Reformed systematic theology can be illustrated just by considering some of the most popular textbooks used at Harvard and Yale, many of which were recommended by Mather in his 1726 handbook for candidates of the ministry, *Manuductio ad ministerium*.²⁸ Reflecting the continued presence of the Anglo-puritan tradition, William Ames's famous *Medulla theologiae* (1623) or James Ussher's *A Body of Divinity* (1645) rank high on Mather's list. While he does not mention them, there can also be no doubt that works based on the Westminster Confession and Catechism loomed very large. However, the teaching tradition of the Heidelberg Catechism was also quite influential among seventeenth-century puritans on both sides of the ocean. This tradition was mediated most importantly through Ursinus's commentaries on the Catechism, later expanded by Pareus, with both versions published in English in multiple

²⁶ See Jan Stievertmann, *Prophecy, Piety, and the Problem of Historicity: Interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures in Cotton Mather's Biblia Americana* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016); Jan Stievertmann, "Biblical Interpretation in Eighteenth-Century America," in *The Oxford Handbook to the Bible in America*, ed. Paul Gutjahr (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 96–114; Reiner Smolinski, "Editor's Introduction," in *Biblia Americana*, vol. 1: *Genesis*, ed. Reiner Smolinski (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck and Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 1–210; and Douglas A. Sweeney, *Edwards the Exegete: Biblical Interpretation and Anglo-Protestant Culture on the Edge of the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²⁷ See Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁸ Cotton Mather, *Manuductio ad ministerium. Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry* (Boston, 1726), 84–89.

editions.²⁹ Two textbooks listed by Mather were also in that broader tradition, the *Methodus theologiae didacticae* (1645) of Heinrich Alting, the famous professor first at Heidelberg and then Groningen, as well as the *Compendium theologiae christianae* (1626) of Basel's Johannes Wolleb. Indeed, the noted emphasis in New England thought on the "covenant" was much beholden to Continental varieties of federalist theology synthesized in these works – specifically the Heidelberg school going back to Olevianus and Ursinus, which had already left its mark on earlier English puritans from Cartwright and Perkins to Ames.³⁰

In the eighteenth century, more recent works, associated with the paradigms of Reformed orthodoxy and scholasticism but also with Pietism, rose to the status of standard references. Prominent examples referenced in the *Manuductio* would be Johannes a Marck's *Compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elenticum* (1690), John Edwards's *Theologia reformata* (1713), and especially Petrus van Mastricht's *Theoretico-practica theologia* (1699), of which Mather wrote that "I know not that the sun has ever shone upon an Humane Composure that is equal to it."³¹ With good reasons Adriaan Neele has thus argued for reading the eighteenth-century heirs of puritanism, such as Jonathan Edwards, in dialogue with European Protestant scholasticism alongside new Pietist-evangelical theologies and the various schools of Enlightenment philosophy.³²

Contrary to what many Americanists have suggested, therefore, New England thought did not develop in intramural debates but always as part of transatlantic conversations, in which colonial elites were usually more on the receiving than on the contributing end. To be sure, this does not make them passive vessels, for they frequently added their own distinct inflections. But there was never anything truly exceptional in how the central *topoi* of systematic theology were conceived of and taught. Specifics of New England religious thought – whether ecclesiology, the understanding of the sacraments and preaching, the order of salvation, or the reformation of society – were well within the bounds of the broad

²⁹ Francis J. Bremer, "The Heidelberg Catechism and the Atlantic Puritan Communities of the Seventeenth Century," in *Der Heidelberger Katechismus: Neue Forschungsbeiträge anlässlich seines 450. Jubiläums/The Heidelberg Catechism: Origins, Characteristics, and Influences: Essays in Reappraisal on the Occasion of Its 450th Anniversary*, ed. Christoph Strohm and Jan Stievermann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015), 320–329.

³⁰ Andrew Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

³¹ Mather, *Manuductio ad ministerium*, 85.

³² Adriaan C. Neele, *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

neo-Augustinian consensus characteristic of the Reformed tradition. The old theories about American modifications of Calvinism, let alone deviations, have largely proven to be chimeras.

The “de-exceptionalization” of New England theology has also reached the two areas in which it was long thought to have differed the most and with the most significant consequences for the future of American culture: ecclesiology and millennialism. Although the kind of Congregationalism codified in the Cambridge Platform (1648) was established in none of the Reformed “sister churches,” the underlying ecclesiology emerged from transatlantic contexts and debates. Congregationalism (or Independency, as it was originally called), partly had Continental roots, not just in Anabaptist ecclesiology but also in the experience of the largely autonomous English “foreigner” churches in the Netherlands. During the Civil War period, Independents in Old and New England clashed over the most scriptural model of church government with English-speaking Presbyterians as well as Dutch and German Reformed apologists. While the Westminster divines were assembled, weighty interventions on behalf of Presbyterianism came from Willem Apollonius of Middleburg and the Leiden professor Friedrich Spanheim. From across the ocean, John Norton sent his point-by-point rejoinder to Apollonius in 1648, with prefatory letters by, among others, John Cotton.³³ At stake, again, was how the true church should be governed, who should hold authority, and how that authority should be wielded. Acrimonious as these debates might have been, they rarely went so far as to deny each other fellowship: “[W]e are not likely to stand aloof from Presbyterial churches faithfully administered, nor from the testimony which they shall give of their members,” wrote Cotton in his own *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (1648), “and the like do I conceive of other Reformed churches in other nations of Christendom.”³⁴ Unlike his grandson, however, Cotton was still convinced that the New England Way anticipated the church during the millennium and ought in fact serve as an example to others for completing the Reformation as that age dawned.

³³ Willem Apollonius, *Consideratio quarundam controversiarum, ad regimen ecclesiae spectantium quae in Angliae regno hodie agitantur* (London, 1644); English: *A Consideration of Certain Controversies at This Time Agitated in the Kingdome of England, Concerning the Government of the Church of God* (London, 1645); Friedrich Spanheim, *Epistola . . . super controversiis quibusdam quae in Ecclesiis Anglicanis agitantur* (London, 1645); and John Norton, *Responsio ad totam quaestionum syllogen a Guiljelmo Apollino propositam* (London, 1648).

³⁴ John Cotton, *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (London, 1648), 90.

Few in Europe were converted to Independency, though, especially as it became associated with political radicalism. New England's clerical elite continued to defend themselves against charges of separatism. And when the Glorious Revolution put an end to Congregationalist ascendancy in England, leading American divines – partly out of fear over Anglicization, partly from conviction – became proponents of a broad inner-Protestant toleration and cooperation. In his *Ratio disciplinae* – like the *Magnalia* written for what are called “the Best of Protestants in Europe” – Cotton Mather still maintained that the New England churches offered the best model of true reformed church governance. He conceded, however, that the founders had been mistaken about the eschatological significance of their experiment and, most grievously, about coercing uniformity. For the present, Mather advocated full fellowship “not only with those of the *Scotch* and *French* Communion” but all earnest Protestants, including “*Episcopalians*, and *Antipaedobaptist*, and the *Lutherans*.” They should be able to sit together “without Offence about their lesser Differences” at the Lord's Table, to which everyone ought to be admitted who embraced the “*Substantials of Religion*, or that *Vital Piety* wherein *all Good Men* are united.”³⁵

Neither Mather nor his Pietist friends thought that true Protestantism prevailed anywhere yet, except in some individuals and church communities. Religious life in the big national churches of Europe appeared to them as mostly lifeless and corrupt. And Mather wrote in his *Ratio disciplinae* that travelers would perhaps still judge it “more religious than any country” but certainly would not find “*New England a New Jerusalem*.”³⁶ Everywhere, the true Reformation appeared an unfinished project, and Mather no longer entertained his grandfathers' hopes that the puritan experiment would make a special contribution. Indeed, given the fearful degeneracy visible in many places, he was not without “Melancholy Apprehension, lest *New England* have now done the most that it was intended for.”³⁷ At the eve of the transatlantic revivals, fostering an active union of experimental Protestants under the banner of evangelical renewal was the order of the day and seen as a necessary preparation for the Second Coming and the rise of the millennium. But no one maintained that New England would take center stage in the millennium, or be the seat of the New Jerusalem, or that New Englanders constituted God's new chosen

³⁵ Cotton Mather, *Ratio disciplinae fratrum Nov-Anglorum: A Faithful Account of the Discipline Professed and Practiced in the Churches of New England* (Boston, 1726), 4.

³⁶ Mather, *Ratio disciplinae*, 195. ³⁷ Mather, *Ratio disciplinae*, 195–196.

people. That role was ascribed, as basic Christian orthodoxy dictated, to Christ's *universal* Church, comprising the truly regenerate among all nations and times included in the covenant of grace.

Although he has been made into a key figure in the alleged Americanization of the millennial promise, Cotton Mather never in fact departed from Christian universalism. Studying his commentaries on the major prophets and the Book of Revelation in the "Biblia Americana" and his final manuscript work on eschatology, the *Trip paradisus*, has rendered that abundantly clear. In the *Trip paradisus* (written 1726/27) he asserted that the vast majority of the saints who would be raptured from the global conflagration preceding Christ's return would naturally come from "the European Parts of the World," because that was where most regenerate Protestants resided. And he added with anything but a triumphalist tone: "[M]y poor American Countrey, Lett me pray and hope, for thy adding some unto the Number!"³⁸ To place any geographic restrictions on Christ's promise of redemption would have been regarded by any puritans as a grave heresy.

Bercovitch notwithstanding, Cotton Mather did not propagate some form of American millennial exceptionalism. And neither did Jonathan Edwards, whose millennialist thought was markedly different from Mather's but shared the pan-Protestant, transatlantic orientation. While the interpretative framework of the *Faithful Narrative* (1737) is still fairly local, Edwards very much saw the large-scale American awakenings that broke out after Whitefield's tour of 1740–1741 in connection with events in England and on the Continent. In *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England*, written at the height of the excitement in 1743, Edwards certainly speculated that God was "doing some great thing to make way for the introduction of the church's latter-day glory, that is to have its first seat in, and is to take its rise from that new world."³⁹ It is important to note, however, that even here these high hopes for New England's churches (which Edwards, given subsequent disappointments, would never repeat in this manner) are tied into an international context.

The progress of the millennium was a global affair, in which the saints of all nations and denominations were joined and which would culminate in a truly boundless glory. When at the end of *Some Thoughts* Edwards

³⁸ Cotton Mather, *The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather: An Edition of the "Trip paradisus,"* ed. Reiner Smolinski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 189.

³⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4: *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 356.

reflects on the means to further advance His kingdom, he particularly highlights the model of Halle that for over thirty years “has spread its happy influences in many parts of the world.”⁴⁰ Paying attention to Edwards’s enthusiasm not just for English and Scottish evangelicalism but also German Pietism or Continental Reformed theologians of his day thus serves as an important corrective to the retrospective Americanization of the colonial revivals (and their appropriation for narratives of national exceptionalism) that came to be known as the Great Awakening. If anything, that Awakening would increase the Protestant internationalism among the heirs of New England puritanism.

⁴⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 527–528.

CHAPTER 4

Colonial North America

Evan Haefeli

Puritan America cannot be set apart from colonial North America as a whole. Puritans were involved in diplomacy, trade, intellectual and mercantile exchange, as well as conflict with colonial powers from Spain, Holland, and France. From the beginning, puritans defined themselves through anti-Catholic tropes, including the anti-Spanish Black Legend about Spanish abuse of Indigenous American peoples and anti-French stories about Catholics murdering Huguenots.¹ While largely sharing the religious vision of the Dutch (New England's puritans generally got along well with the Dutch of New Netherland), mercantile and imperial rivalry in both the West and East Indies occasionally made them enemies. Most important was the military and spiritual competition with the French to the north. Puritans measured their evangelical efforts against the far more successful French Catholic missions, while the advent of a long series of increasingly intense imperial wars sent hundreds of puritans into captivity among the French and their Indigenous allies. In French Canada, some captives converted and joined French Catholic society. The majority returned, however, writing up and recounting their experiences in a variety of ways that elaborated on the genre of the captivity narrative that had debuted just before these imperial wars began. Outlining the international dimensions of this colonial North American world, this chapter considers how this broader context of struggle, rivalry, and interaction shaped puritan American literature.

When considering the puritans' position within colonial North America, it is essential to remember that their mental and material worlds remained rooted in the Europe they had so reluctantly left behind. After all, that is what defined what it meant to be puritan. Looking back from

¹ William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558–1660* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1971); and J. F. Bosher, "The Franco-Catholic Danger, 1660–1715," *History* 79.255 (1994): 5–30.

the 1690s, Cotton Mather knew why his grandparents had suffered “much Poverty and Misery, with daily fears of Massacre from Indian Salvages, in a bleak Region, a Thousand Leagues from ones own Country.” It was to enjoy “the Liberties of the Gospel,” which rendered those sufferings, “not so sad and so hard, as that of being in the Gripping Talons of Archbishop Laud” and his fellow “ceremony-mongers,” who “ever were, and ever will be Enemies to all the true Interests of the Nation.” When Mather said “nation” he meant England, not the “American Wilderness, now known by the Name of NEW-ENGLAND.” New England stood out within that greater nation because it had been peopled “with Evangelical Churches, by such as were driven out of the Realm of England” through the Laudian “Persecutions,” but that only made them a less corrupt version of English people. This contrast between “popery at home and purity abroad,” as Susan Hardman Moore points out, helped justify the unusual move to the colonies of an unusually elite bunch of emigrants “by claiming exceptional circumstances.”²

In addition to the conflict within the Church of England that had produced puritanism in the first place, puritan sense of self, in both Old and New England, was also rooted in an international struggle against popery. In 1629, before departing for America, John Winthrop drew up a list of justifications for “the Intended Plantation in New England.” He claimed it would be “a service to the Church of great consequence to carry the Gospel into those parts of the world, to help on the coming in of fullness of the Gentiles and to raise a bulwark against the kingdom of Antichrist, which the Jesuits labor to rear up in those parts.” Converting Native Americans (and Jews) would both contribute to the onset of the millennium and weaken the Roman Catholic empires of Spain and France – a more than purely academic point in 1629, since England was currently at war with both Spain (1625–1630) and France (1627–1629).³

As Owen Stanwood notes, English colonization involved “geopolitical rivalries with strong religious implications” on both sides of the Catholic–Protestant divide: already in 1565 a Spanish commander justified the

² Susan Hardman Moore, “Popery, Purity and Providence: Deciphering the New England Experiment,” in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 257–289 (270); Cotton Mather, *Eleutheria: or, An idea of the Reformation in England* (London, 1698), 75–76.

³ John Winthrop, “Reasons . . . for . . . the Intended Plantation in New England,” in *Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America, 1580–1640*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1995), 134. I have modernized the spelling.

slaughter of several hundred Huguenots in Florida by explaining that “they were Lutherans and enemies of our Holy Catholic faith.” After killing the Frenchmen, the Spanish built the fortress town of St. Augustine, which guarded the Spanish Catholic presence in Florida until 1763. Florida was just the closest piece of the vast Spanish Empire in America, which sprawled across the southern fringe of North America, down into the Caribbean, and across all of Central and much of South America. Puritans in New England remained acutely aware of its presence. English puritans had been active in colonizing the Caribbean in the seventeenth century. Several New England puritans played prominent roles in Oliver Cromwell’s Western Design of 1654–1655, which tried to conquer Hispaniola, but only managed to capture Jamaica instead. Cromwell then actively recruited New England puritans to colonize the island, but few heeded his call, preferring the relative safety of New England. Still, New Englanders did not ignore Spanish America. Their merchants traded to Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean. Their privateers could attack Spanish ships in wartime. Cotton Mather even taught himself Spanish at the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession so that he could publish some basic Catechisms with which he hoped to convert Spanish colonists to Protestantism.⁴

Spanish America always lurked in the background of New England, but it was their more immediate neighbors who attracted most of their attention. To the north were the French, in Acadia and Canada. To the south and west stood the Dutch (until 1675). Occasional allies (the Dutch had, after all, given shelter in Leiden and elsewhere to puritan refugees, including the Separatists who launched the Plymouth colony), the Dutch were also increasingly rivals for territory and trade in North America and around the globe. Until the 1650s, the Connecticut River Valley and Long Island Sound formed a borderland between these competing Protestant powers. Edward Winslow highlighted this situation in a 1635 petition he submitted to the Lords Commissioners for the Plantations that complained that “the French and Dutch do endeavor to divide the land” of New England “between them.” Attempting to gain sympathy at Court for

⁴ Owen Stanwood, “Catholics, Protestants, and the Clash of Civilizations in Early America,” in *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America*, ed. Chris Beneke and Christopher S. Grenda (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 218–240 (221–222); Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica: Oliver Cromwell’s Bid for Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); and Evan Haefeli with Owen Stanwood, “Jesuits, Huguenots, and the Apocalypse: The Origins of America’s First French Book,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 116, Part 1 (2006): 91–94.

the Plymouth colony, he portrayed it as threatened by England's enemies. On the "east side" (in present-day Maine), the French had "entered and seized upon one of our [trading] houses," killed and captured several Englishmen, and "carried away the goods." On the west, the Dutch had "made entry upon Connecticut River" and "have raised a fort and threaten to expel" the Plymouth colonists "thence who are also planted upon the same river, maintaining possession for His Majesty to their great charge and hazard both of lives and goods." Winslow requested the English government to "either procure their peace with those foreign states, or else to give special warrant" to the Plymouth colonists "to right and defend themselves against all foreign enemies."⁵

It is a shame that the Dutch have been largely forgotten or ignored in New England studies. There are various reasons for this, not least that the conquest that subjected colonial Dutch North America took place almost a century before that of New France, rendering the Dutch much less ominous in Anglo-American memory. However, the Dutch frontier mattered in the early formation of New England culture. Indeed, it served as one of the primary reasons for the creation of the Confederation of New England in 1643, a defensive alliance of all the New England colonies – save Rhode Island. Created in response to England's fall into Civil War, its founders proclaimed that they had bound themselves together because "we live encompassed with people of several Nations and strang languages which hereafter may prove inurious to us or our posteritie." The "insolences and outrages" committed by "the Natives," combined with the "sad distractions in England," made this act of unity imperative.⁶

Several texts produced in these years arguably merit study within the broader ambit of Anglo-Dutch literature. First is a brief text generally attributed to the failed New England puritan, the soldier Captain John Underhill. Published in London on the basis of several letters written from New England, it presents a paranoid picture of a Dutch-Indigenous conspiracy that threatened to overthrow New England. The anonymously published text, *The Second Part of the Tragedy of Amboyna; or, a True Relation of a most Bloody, Treacherous, and Cruel Design of the Dutch in the New-Netherlands in America, for the total Ruining and murdering of the English Colonies in New England, being extracted out of several letters very*

⁵ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1952), 272–273.

⁶ Articles of Confederation, 1643, in Henry M. Ward, *The United Colonies of New England, 1643–90* (New York: Vantage Press, 1961), 384.

lately written from New-England to several gentlemen and merchants in London (London, 1653), is a short (seven-page) pamphlet that situates the tensions in New England within the global context of Anglo-Dutch relations, as made clear by the reference to the Indonesian island of Amboyna, where several English agents of the East India Company and their servants were killed in 1623 by Dutch East India Company agents on suspicion of plotting to kill the Dutch. It begins with the remark that between the Dutch, the English, and the French, there had been “ever (till now of late) a friendly correspondence, and a mutual assistance against the common Enemy, the barbarous Indians.” Then it recalled how New England’s Captain John Underhill, “prizing Christian Blood beyond Indian Wealth and Treasure,” helped the Dutch when at war with their neighboring “Heathens” by killing “fourteen hundred” of them in a surprise attack. (This attack came during Kieft’s War, a successor conflict to the Pequot War that took place in territory claimed by the Dutch, but involved a number of puritan New England immigrants, like Underhill.)⁷ Alas, “Ingratitude” led the Dutch to revert to the treacherous tactics that had led them to murder English competitors for the East Indian spice trade on the Indonesian island of Amboyna. They allegedly struck an alliance with the Indigenous neighbors of New England and supplied them with guns to attack and kill the English. Fortunately, the plot was betrayed to the English, who seized muskets and ammunition from some of their Indigenous neighbors and, in Connecticut, were mobilizing to attack the Dutch. Not long afterward, Underhill led a small expedition that captured the one remaining Dutch outpost in present-day Connecticut, the small fur-trading fort known as the “House of Hope” located next to Hartford.⁸

Not all Anglo-Dutch relations were hostile, however. As fellow Calvinists and Reformed Protestants, the colonial Dutch had much in common with New Englanders. The Dutch befriended a number of New Englanders, and had close relations with several prominent merchants and others, including John Winthrop, Jr. Dutch governors of New Netherland encouraged the immigration of New Englanders into their

⁷ Evan Haefeli, “Kieft’s War and the Cultures of Violence in Colonial America,” in *Lethal Imagination: Violence and Brutality in American History*, ed. Michael A. Bellesisle (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 17–42.

⁸ Anon., *The Second Part of the Tragedy of Amboyna; or, a True Relation of a Most Bloody, Treacherous, and Cruel Design of the Dutch in the New-Netherlands in America, for the Total Ruining and Murthering of the English Colonies in New England, Being Extracted out of Several Letters Very Lately Written from New-England to Several Gentlemen and Merchants in London* (London, 1653), 3, 4.

territory. Unwittingly, they were letting in a treacherous Trojan Horse that would turn on them during the English invasion of 1664. Nevertheless, friendly relations continued after the conquest. Several Dutch families moved to New England, especially when they fell into political trouble in New Netherland or, later, New York. Integrating quite smoothly, they reinforced the trade and cultural exchange between the two regions well into the eighteenth century. On occasion, the Dutch reciprocated the favor. Skeptical about the people at the Salem witch trials who were acting “as if possessed by the Devil, and are ill with wonderful convulsions and falling and tormented by great and strange pains,” who, “as if they were deprived of their sanity and unable to come to their senses,” were accusing “many honest people of being sorcerers and witches,” they questioned the legitimacy of the witch hunt and offered refuge in New York to several individuals fleeing it.⁹

The cultural exchange facilitated by individuals moving between New England and New Netherland included ideas about religious liberty. Colonial North America featured both intolerance and radical experiments in toleration, and puritan New England engaged with both ends of the spectrum directly and indirectly. The 1657 Flushing Remonstrance is a good example. Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged from the start that there is little that we know, or ever can know, about the Remonstrance or the men of Flushing who composed and signed it. In 1789 a fire destroyed the home of the town’s clerk, and with it the town’s colonial archives, which might have given us a more detailed account of how it was composed and what the community did with it after 1657. However, various scraps of information indicate that the document, effectively a petition to New Netherland’s governor, reflects the ideas of more than two dozen people. Drawn up by the town clerk after a meeting of the residents, it was signed by about thirty townsmen, including the sheriff and the blacksmith. Thus, it represents more than the philosophy of a single person. This communal aspect both gives it special interest, as a reflection of communal views, and helps account for its slightly haphazard quality.

⁹ Evan Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), chs. 1–3, 5, 8, and 10; Louis H. Roper, “The Fall of New Netherland and Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Imperial Formation, 1654–1676,” *New England Quarterly* 87.4 (2014): 666–708; Evan Haefeli, “Leislerians in Boston: Some Rare Dutch Correspondence,” *De Haelve Maen* 73.4 (2000): 77–81, reprinted in Margriet Lacy, ed., *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerswijck Seminar Papers*, vol. 3 (Albany: New Netherland Institute 2013), 69–73; quotation from Letter from Jacob Melijn to Doctor Johannes Kerfbijl, July 11, 1692. For analysis and translation, see Evan Haefeli, “Dutch New York and the Salem Witch Trials: Some New Evidence,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 110, Part 2 (2003): 277–308 (303).

Many of the signers had spent time in Rhode Island before moving to Flushing, where at least some of them would have become familiar with the radical religious ideas, including a complete separation of church and state, advocated by Roger Williams, who had founded the colony two decades earlier as a refuge from the narrow orthodoxy of Massachusetts. Other radical religious influences are also evident. These include the mystical vision of Samuel Gorton, who led a small group of followers in Warwick, Rhode Island, and Baptists such as Lady Deborah Moody, who led another group of fellow dissidents from the New England Way in a neighboring town on Long Island. These influences are an important dimension of New England culture, even though they were largely confined to Rhode Island and eastern New Netherland, where many of those who could not conform to the established order migrated.¹⁰

The Flushing Remonstrance thus mixed influences from New England and Holland. At the same time it was not completely endorsed within Flushing. Some preferred the Reformed consensus prevailing in the rest of New England and New Netherland.¹¹ It remains a remarkable text, firmly rooted in Scripture but also reflecting an English understanding of Dutch law. One scholar has actually keyed lines in the text to a series of Scriptural passages (fifteen clear references to thirteen different passages).¹² Drafted to protest a new law against the Quaker missionaries who were beginning to circulate in the colony, it insists they could not enforce it by deferring to the higher authority of God, “for out of Christ God is a consuming fire, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”¹³ It counters the claim that the Quakers were “destructive unto Magistracy and Ministerye,” by insisting on the separation of their powers: “the Magistrate hath his sword in his hand and the Minister hath the sword in his hand,” each with their own sphere of authority, just like “Moses and Christ.” Dutch law, they claimed, coincided with this Scriptural injunction.

¹⁰ Haefeli, *New Netherland*, ch. 6. Not all signed it at the same time, and not all who signed it were permanent residents. Some came from neighboring towns or soon moved away to other towns. Some Flushing residents who certainly agreed with its ideas did not sign it, most importantly, John Bowne. It is also clear that a minority within Flushing did not fully endorse the views of the Remonstrance and repeatedly complained to the Dutch and English authorities about their more radical neighbors.

¹¹ On religious divisions within seventeenth-century Flushing and its neighboring towns under Dutch and English rule, see Haefeli, *New Netherland*, 146–147, 221–231, 261, 269.

¹² R. Ward Harrington, “Speaking Scripture: The Flushing Remonstrance of 1657,” *Quaker History* 82.2 (1993): 104–109 (106–107 for its text).

¹³ Heb. 12:29: “For out of God is a consuming fire.” Heb. 10:31: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” For the full text of the Remonstrance, see Harrington, “Speaking Scripture,” 106–107.

As they explained, the “law of love, peace and liberty in the states extending to Jews, Turks and Egyptians, as they are considered sons of Adam, which is the glory of the outward state of Holland, soe love, peace and liberty, extending to all in Christ Jesus, condemns hatred, war and bondage.” They could not “offend one of his little ones, in whatsoever form, name or title hee appears in, whether Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist or Quaker, but shall be glad to see anything of God in any of them.” And so, they concluded, “if any of these said persons come in love unto us, we cannot in conscience lay violent hands upon them, but give them free egresse and regresse unto our Town, and houses, as God shall persuade our consciences, for we are bounde by the law of God and man to doe good unto all men and evil to noe man.”¹⁴

This extraordinary document represents the willingness of some early Americans to defend what has now become a generally accepted principle of religious freedom for all. For example, before the Flushing Remonstrance virtually all defenses of religious liberty tended either to be for one’s own dissent from the established religion or to recognize a known, if now subordinated, religion – like the question of whether and how to tolerate Roman Catholicism in the English world, or Protestantism in France. Even the question of Catholics tolerating Protestants (arguably a new religion) was not quite the same as what the Flushing Remonstrance proposed. Reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the puritans of New England (including Roger Williams, who despised the Quakers) claimed to be restoring the true original Christianity rather than inaugurating a newly revealed version of it. They were peeling away centuries of corruptions to get back to the simpler roots of Christianity, not innovating. The people of Flushing, on the other hand, advocated tolerance for new revelations – most immediately the Quaker message, which they had only just encountered for the first time in the fall of 1657. They were arguing for the rights of a new, largely unknown religion. Insofar as some of them were already sympathetic to the Quakers’ message, this could be seen as having an element of self-interest. However, not all of the signers of the Remonstrance became Quakers. The way the Remonstrance made a case for tolerating new religions as a matter of general principle was virtually unheard of. Even more unusual was linking this argument to a vision of a religiously pluralistic society that granted the same rights to both Christians and non-Christians.

¹⁴ Gal. 6:10: “As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

The Flushing Remonstrance has been seen as effectively prefiguring and welcoming the incredible religious diversity that has now become characteristic of Flushing, the most religiously diverse community in the United States today.¹⁵ It has not, however, been the subject of literary study. Nevertheless, there are clear resonances between the language of the document and elements in English literature. For example, take this extract from the William Blake poem, “The Divine Image,” from his 1789 *Songs of Innocence*: “And all must love the human form, / In heathen, Turk, or jew; / Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell / There God is dwelling too.” A fascinating text, given its plural authorship and mixed intellectual and cultural heritage, the Flushing Remonstrance reminds us that the puritans of New England were never isolated or alone as they wrestled with the contours of church–state relations. All around them, new social experiments and ideas were taking shape. The irrepressible exchange of people, goods, and ideas across the cultural frontiers of colonial North America offered opportunities and challenges to the inhabitants of puritan New England.

While the Dutch and Spanish influence on American puritan literature deserves more attention, they were nevertheless comparatively mild compared with that of the French. The French case was also more complicated, in that there were Huguenots with whom the puritans identified and sympathized and, later, welcomed into their society after King Louis XIV’s suppression of this Protestant minority drove thousands to flee France. Since Huguenots were discouraged from colonial efforts after they lost their Florida colony to the Spanish, and then lost many of their leaders and thousands of fellow Christians in the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre of Huguenots by their Catholic countrymen in 1572, the colonization of French America was largely undertaken by Catholics.

Puritan ministers never forgot the sufferings of the Huguenots. The intersection of the domestic and international struggles against popery meant puritans sometimes sympathized more with Huguenots than with their fellow Englishmen, like the Laudian “ceremonialists” or even actual Roman Catholics. Periodically, New England ministers would invoke the tragic history of Huguenots and other European Protestants to remind their congregations of the dangers of popery. The St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre was an especially important symbol of Roman Catholics’ murderous propensity for treachery and deceit. For example, in the midst

¹⁵ R. Scott Hanson, *City of Gods: Religious Freedom, Immigration, and Pluralism in Flushing, Queens* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

of the Seven Years' War, during the winter of 1756, in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, the Reverend Stephen Williams preached several times about how "the dead bodies" of "brave protestants . . . were thrown into the River Seine all now red with blood which ran out of the town" while "there was a great rejoicing at Rome, [and] firing of cannon."¹⁶

Stephen Williams's anti-Catholicism, and his hostility to the French, had a very personal edge to it. When he was ten, in the winter of 1704, a French and Native American raiding party took him and much of the rest of his family captive. Carried back to Canada along with almost half of his fellow villagers from the small town of Deerfield, Stephen had experienced his share of suffering from cold, hunger, and the shock of seeing his neighbors killed. Conflict with the French overshadowed the puritans' sojourn in New England from the time they arrived in the late 1620s and remained a concern until the conquest of Canada in 1760, fueling New England puritans' propensity for anti-Catholicism and Francophobia.¹⁷

New England puritans had a constant sense of rivalry with the French, in peace and war: for territory, fishing grounds, the allegiance of Native Americans, and the competition for souls. Indeed, thanks to that rivalry, the first French-language text published in North America was published in Boston, not French Canada. With the aid of a Huguenot minister, Cotton Mather published a collection of Jesuit missionary writing that had recently been seized from the house of a prominent Albany merchant and fur trade diplomat during New York's version of the Glorious Revolution. Among the reasons Mather supported this publication was his desire both to denounce the deceit used by Jesuits in their missionary activities and to assure readers that the comparative failure of puritan missionary work was more a sign that the time was not right for the true conversion of Indigenous Americans than an indication of a lack of puritan missionary effort.¹⁸

In literary terms, the recurring conflicts with New France transformed the character of the captivity narrative – the most unique literary form to develop in New England. Originally developed after King Philip's War to

¹⁶ Stephen Williams, "On ye Popish principles," Folder January 30, 1756, March 4, 1756, Stephen Williams, Sermons, 1727–1803, Massachusetts Historical Society. I have modernized the spelling.

¹⁷ For more on the raid, and the broader regional context that produced and followed it, see Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

¹⁸ Ezechiel Carré, *Enchantillon de la Doctrine que les Jésuites enseignent aus Sauvages du Neauveau Monde* (*A Sample of the Doctrine That the Jesuits Teach to the Savages of the New World*) (Boston, 1690). For analysis and translation of the text, see Haefeli and Stanwood, "Jesuits, Huguenots, and the Apocalypse," 59–119.

tell the remarkable story of Mary Rowlandson, taken captive during a wintertime raid and held captive for months before she was finally released, puritan captivity narratives were designed to draw a spiritual message out of these harsh experiences, as the title of Rowlandson's narrative indicates: *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. Her ferocious Indigenous captors were not autonomous actors defending themselves against puritan encroachments, but rather part of a broader divine punishment of New England for its sins, and a test of its faith. Captivity narratives like Rowlandson's were also extraordinary in that they narrated the lives and experiences of women and children (like Stephen Williams), which otherwise did not receive such close attention. The number and importance of captivity narratives grew rapidly after the beginning of a long round of imperial wars against France in 1689. Hundreds of New Englanders, young and old, female and male, were taken captive by the French or their Indigenous allies before New France was finally conquered in 1760. The literary aftershock of adding French Catholics to the captivity story became apparent after the 1704 Deerfield raid.

The wars against the colonial French raised anew the old dilemma of confronting Roman Catholicism. That was, in fact, the primary theme of the most significant literary product to emerge from the Deerfield raid, the captivity narrative composed by its minister, John Williams. His 1707 account, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, deviated from the so-called traditional model of the puritan captivity narrative in that he spent most of his time with – and directed most of his puritanical ire against – the Catholic French. Indeed, so important was the distinction between Catholic and non-Catholic that Williams clearly distinguished between different groups of Indigenous people based not only on their ethnicity (Iroquoian vs. Algonquian) but also on their adherence to French Catholicism. Unlike Mary Rowlandson, Williams did not stigmatize all Indigenous peoples as savage brutes. On the contrary, he clearly got along much better with his non-Catholic captors than with his Catholic ones. Consequently, his text had a very different publishing trajectory from that of Rowlandson's. Where her narrative was republished in times of hostility with Native peoples, Williams's text is associated with anti-Catholic tensions into the nineteenth century.¹⁹

Literary studies of captivity still focus on Boston (where most were initially printed) and the Mathers (who played a role in getting many early

¹⁹ Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, "The Redeemed Captive as Recurrent Seller: Politics and Publication, 1707–1854," *New England Quarterly* 77.3 (2004): 341–367.

captivity stories published, including Mary Rowlandson's).²⁰ However, the Mathers did not completely dominate the genre. Indeed, as the unusually well-documented Deerfield case shows, captivity stories circulated in a variety of ways, often independent of ministerial control, whether in oral tradition or manuscript. Ministers like the Mathers proved instrumental in getting the narratives published. Yet, on closer reading, not all captivity narratives served the same ministerial agenda. John Williams, for example, although related to and personal friends with Increase and Cotton Mather, did not agree with their religious or political partisanship. Indeed, he published his captivity narrative in part to criticize the Mathers and their opposition to then-governor of Massachusetts Joseph Dudley.

The Deerfield experience reflects a puritan frontier perspective, not that of Boston. For several decades, another Williams connection, Solomon Stoddard, minister of Northampton, had favored a slight shift toward a more presbyterian-style Congregational Church. He did not want standards of admission to Church membership to be as strict as the Mathers wanted. At the same time, Stoddard wanted ministers to have more authority in how their congregations were run. Stoddard's approach proved very influential on the religious culture of the Connecticut River Valley, including among the extended Williams family who thrived within it up through the American Revolution. Stephen, John's son, for example, served as minister at Longmeadow until his death in 1782. Jonathan Edwards, a grandson of Stoddard's, ran into difficulty with this network during his ministry in Northampton. Attempting to enforce a more Matherian, restricted vision of Church membership, he lost the struggle and his post, eventually leaving the Connecticut Valley for greener pastures elsewhere. The Mathers and Edwards, in other words, are not emblematic of New England puritan culture. Other important strains existed, adding to the culture and its literature in ways the Mathers would not entirely agree with. Williams's narrative, for example, proved instrumental in preserving Dudley as the colony's governor in the face of a determined campaign by the Mathers and their associated in Boston to unseat him. Williams and other frontier pastors supported Dudley as good on frontier

²⁰ Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Captivity and Exchange in American Literature, 1682–1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997); Teresa A. Toulouse, *The Captive's Position: Female Narrative, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). See also Lorayne Carroll, "Captivity Literature," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early American Literature*, ed. Kevin Hayes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 143–168; Evan Haefeli, "Captivity in North America," in *Oxford Bibliographies in Atlantic History*, ed. Trevor Burnard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

defense, and instrumental in the prisoner exchanges that allowed Williams and many other New England captives to return home from captivity in New France.

The Deerfield experience also offers a rare window into the other side of the frontier experience. While Williams rallied support for the war against the French and their Native allies with strong anti-Catholic appeals, a number of his fellow captives were taking advantage of the opportunity (or being forced to take advantage of it) to convert to Roman Catholicism and assimilate into the society of New France. Several of those captured during this war assimilated so well that they thrived and prospered as subjects of French Canada. Most remarkable was a young girl, Esther Wheelwright, captured on the Maine frontier the same year as Williams and the Deerfielders. Wheelwright became a nun and even for a time a head of her order in Quebec. New France offered her avenues for professional and intellectual advancement that would have been denied her had she remained in New England.²¹

Girls indeed proved more liable to stay in Canada rather than return home, followed by widowed women who did not have strong kin connections back in New England. For most of them and the male captives who followed their example, their lives in New France were much less exceptional. Marriage and work, usually at the social level of artisans and farmers, was the usual fate. While stories of New England puritans who became French Catholics have generally been overlooked or marginalized in studies of New England, they are important to keep in mind. New Englanders would have known stories about captives who converted even if they did not know the individuals, because captivity narratives like that of John Williams spent so much time bewailing the issue. The French Catholic threat was real and personal.²²

Assimilating into French Catholic culture was not the worst puritan nightmare. Assimilating into Indigenous Catholic culture was.

²¹ Ann M. Little, *The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

²² For Williams's *The Redeemed Captive*, see the edition in Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captive Histories: English, French, and Native Narratives of the 1704 Deerfield Raid* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 132–153. On Puritan captives in New France, see William Henry Foster, *The Captors' Narrative: Catholic Women and Their Puritan Men on the Early American Frontier* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Evan Haefeli, "Ransoming New England Captives in New France," *French Colonial History* 1 (2002): 113–128; Evan Haefeli, "Making Papists of Puritans: Accounting for New English Conversions in New France," in *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, ed. James Muldoon (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), 215–230.

John Williams experienced this outrage when one of his daughters, Stephen's younger sister Eunice, was taken captive to Kahnawake, the Mohawk town and Jesuit mission station near Montreal. She remained behind when Williams returned to New England, leaving him to worry about those "among the savages," some of whom, including Eunice, "having lost the English tongue, will be lost and turn savages in a little time unless something extraordinary prevent [it]." He asked for his fellow New Englanders' "compassion and prayers to God to gather them, being outcasts ready to perish." Eunice ended up staying at Kahnawake, marrying a Mohawk, and raising a family there. Years later, after she had long forgotten how to speak English, she visited her New England family. Although Stephen prayed ostentatiously for her soul, Eunice returned to live out her life as a Mohawk Catholic.²³

Surveying the North American margins of New England, one can see how puritans there could legitimately see themselves as embattled – with Spanish and French Catholics, Dutch Protestants, and various Native nations. The New Englanders eventually triumphed over all of them, becoming, along with the wider British Empire, masters of all North America east of the Mississippi at the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763. However, their embattled origins preserved a sense of vulnerability that could provoke a violent reaction, as it did after 1774, when the British Empire decided to tolerate and empower the French Canadians. Rather than stick with an empire that embraced their popish foes, the children of puritan New England led the way out of the British Empire and into the United States. While there were very distinctly American dimensions and locations to the relations and conflicts that had shaped their colonial culture, most fit into preexisting European tensions and competitions that spanned the globe. New England began as part of a broad, international struggle. The North American context of puritan literary production reflected their participation in that wider competition, even as they gave it a particularly intense local gloss.

²³ Williams, *Redeemed Captive*, in Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive Histories*, 156. For more on Eunice, see John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

CHAPTER 5

Caribbean

Kristina Bross

In the early going of Toni Morrison's novel *A Mercy*, Jacob Vaark, the patriarch of a New England farm, travels to Maryland to collect a debt from a slave-holding, Portuguese creole man who is master of the "Jublio" plantation. The character illustrates the fluidity of colonial identities and the porousness of colonial borders in the seventeenth century. Jacob Vaark is half Dutch and half English. He was educated in an English poorhouse before inheriting a patroonship from "the side of the family that had abandoned him," and so finds himself a landowner in an English colony recently ceded by the Dutch.¹ His reaction to his plantation visit suggests how interconnected the colonial world of the Americas was. In particular, it illustrates the close links between the mainland colonies and Caribbean islands. At Jublio, Vaark is at once drawn to the luxury and wealth of the southerly plantation and also repulsed by what he sees as the "lax, flashy cunning of the Papists" whose way of life depends on the work of enslaved Africans.² He muses after his visit on how he might increase his worldly wealth without sacrificing his morality. He decides to enter into "commerce," that is, to facilitate the colonial trade in rum without overseeing the labor of production himself, a plan, he muses, that "was as sweet as the sugar on which it was based. And there was a profound difference between the intimacy of slave bodies at Jublio and a remote labor force in Barbados. Right? Right, he thought, looking at a sky vulgar with stars. Clear and right."³

Puritan colonists in New England shared Jacob's sense that there was a difference between profiting at a distance from the slave labor of Caribbean

¹ Vaark spends considerable time thinking about the international politics of colonial North America and the consequences for borders and identities; Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (New York: Vintage International, 2008), 14–15. See Evan Haefeli's Chapter 4 in this volume for a fuller discussion of the intersection of New England with other European colonial ventures. Vaark's trip to Jublio takes place in 1682 (Morrison, *A Mercy*, 11). The novel as a whole takes place in the 1680s and 1690s.

² Morrison, *A Mercy*, 15. ³ Morrison, *A Mercy*, 40.

colonies versus actually living and working in those colonies. To be sure, some puritans in the Americas owned plantations and profited from the forced labor of Africans and Native peoples. But however intimate the connection of individual puritans to Caribbean realities, the Massachusetts Bay and the other northern English colonies as a whole held themselves apart, emphatically defining themselves as *not* Caribbean. Such a contrast was as necessary for the puritan New England sense of self as the Caribbean's plantations and trade were for New England's economy. This dual connection to the Caribbean – of mind and of market – can be traced in puritan literature of the Americas; indeed, in some sense the complicated relationship of puritans to the Caribbean can be said to have produced that literature. Yet until recently, we have read New England literature as inwardly focused, understanding the history of the region as a world apart from other colonial ventures – even those schemes backed and peopled by the same colonial-settler groups as inhabited New England. In so doing, generations of scholars have taken New England puritans at their word that there was a chasm separating the Caribbean from New England colonies, despite clear evidence of their ideological and material connections.

The erasure of a Caribbean legacy from early American literary studies comprises an example of the “silencing of the past” that Michel-Rolph Trouillot has identified as a defining feature of American historiography.⁴ This chapter seeks to reconnect American literary histories with the Caribbean, to show that we cannot fully understand either New England or puritan American literature, especially in the seventeenth century, unless we recognize the entanglement of the Caribbean with New England through the circulation and exchange of goods, bodies, citizens, texts, and ideas. In short, this chapter argues that the Caribbean shaped the puritan American imaginary: on the one hand, the islands were key trading partners, and the continued existence of a puritan “New England Way” depended on this trade as a source of steady income. On the other, New Englanders sought to distance themselves from the islands. When the Quaker John Norton tried to shame New England authorities into better treatment of his brethren, he reminded them that they were “a Plantation Religious,” not like Barbados, a mere “plantation of Trade.”⁵ Puritans in

⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *The Silencing of the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

⁵ John Norton, *The Heart of N-England Rent*, 58, quoted in Joy Howard, “Spirited into America: Narratives of Possession, 1650–1850,” PhD dissertation (Purdue University, 2011).

New England constructed the Caribbean as the worldly, if not devilish shadow of their godly plantation. They contrasted themselves with Caribbean settler-colonists as the plyers of trade and the harborers of suspect practices and beliefs, such as Quakerism and witchcraft. In this way, New England puritans displaced troublesome people, beliefs, and practices from their own shores, writing themselves as saints under threat from the corruptions that assailed them from without. At one and the same time, the islands were understood as instrumental to their own success and as a foil to their godliness. The Caribbean was a place where wealth could be amassed and English national colonization confirmed, and at the same time, its islands were the source of worldly and supernatural pollution against which the Bay Colony defined itself.

Given this chapter's focus on the ways the Caribbean shaped puritan American literature, it is important to remember that the Caribbean as a place of American puritanism is not only a fantasy or construct. Puritans settled in various Atlantic spaces throughout the period of their migration to the Americas from England, both individually and in groups. Indeed, puritans settled Providence Island, a colony off the coast of present-day Nicaragua, in 1630 – the same year as the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony – via a joint-stock company held by leading members of the puritan movement in England. This was a puritan colony of a very different stripe than the more familiar New England settlements; puritans in the island colony had few qualms about slavery – the population was majority enslaved when Spain retook the island from the English in 1641.⁶ Yet, if we detach ourselves from a proto-national view of settler colonialism, Providence Island has just as much claim to “Americanness” as New England. As Karen Kupperman has shown, many believed that Providence Island would be “*the* great puritan colony.”⁷ That New England could be understood as the heart of an English puritan diaspora was far from a settled question for decades. Rather, English authorities saw New England as a limited experiment, a poor venture that would have to give way to the more successful Chesapeake and Caribbean plantations. The backers of Providence Island (some of whom also invested in the Massachusetts Bay Colony) saw New England as a refuge, a hiding place for a few godly souls in retreat from the sins of old England, but they saw Providence Island as

⁶ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island 1630–1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, first paperback edition: 1995), 172. Which is not to suggest that puritans on Providence Island found slavery – in theory or practice – uncomplicated.

⁷ Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 1, emphasis in original.

“the first step on a course that would result in the development of a mighty English empire in Central America.”⁸

Besides Providence Island, puritans explored or planted themselves in Antigua, Barbados, Bermuda, Jamaica, St. Christopher, and beyond.⁹ Oliver Cromwell himself, who became leader of Britain in 1650 after English revolutionaries executed King Charles I, exhorted New England settlers to consider emigrating to the Caribbean. In 1655, he had Jamaica in his sights, which the English had wrested from Spanish control after failing miserably to obtain a foothold in the region through the conquest of Hispaniola.¹⁰ He appointed Edward Winslow, former Plymouth Colony governor and signatory to the Mayflower Compact, to govern English holdings in the West Indies.¹¹ In 1656, he commissioned Daniel Gookin, who would later become a prominent Massachusetts Bay citizen, to recruit New England residents to transplant to Jamaica.¹² In his instructions to the English colonial authorities, Cromwell ordered them to “cause the terms and conditions to be published and proclaimed in the islands and plantations of the English in America, and use such other means as you shall find necessary for inciting people to come and plant upon this place.”¹³

Gookin had a difficult time “inciting” those in New England to pull up stakes and replant themselves in the Caribbean. But the failure of Gookin’s commission did not seal off New England from the attraction or influence of the Caribbean. Consider that the family of John Winthrop, the first governor of the Bay Colony, sent two sons to seek their fortunes in the Caribbean. Henry Winthrop never made a go of it. After a couple of years in Barbados, he left the island to join his father in New England (drowning in a river just a day after he arrived). But Samuel, one of the younger sons, successfully planted himself in Antigua after stopovers in Barbados and

⁸ Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 18.

⁹ See Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 27, for a map of the British West Indies.

¹⁰ The so-called Western Design.

¹¹ He died early on in the attempt to invade. On his role as a civil commissioner in the West Indies, see Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica: Oliver Cromwell’s Bid for Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2017), 20–21.

¹² For Gookin’s biography and his multifaceted career as a settler colonist, see Roger Thompson, “Daniel Gookin,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

¹³ Oliver Cromwell, “To All Persons Whom These May Concern, in the Several Townes, and Plantations of the United Colonies in New England (London, 1656), *Early English Books Online*, accessed July 17, 2019.

St. Christopher, not to mention the Azores, establishing one of the first large-scale sugar plantations on that island.¹⁴

Although his sons sought their fortunes in the Caribbean, John Winthrop himself was firmly invested in the Bay Colony. In 1640, he wrote in his journal about the intracolonial competition for English settlers, claiming that because they were sickly and starving, “some families have forsaken both Providence and other the Caribbee Islands and Virginia to come live here.”¹⁵ Although “it was thought very needful to further plantations of churches in the West Indies,” Winthrop nevertheless records that he wrote to Lord Saye to oppose recruiting New Englanders to the islands, presenting his argument that “God had chosen this country” – that is, New England – “to plant his people in,” and warning Saye against setting himself counter to God’s plan.¹⁶ Winthrop does not dismiss the possibility that places such as Providence, Barbados, or Jamaica could be valid sites for plantation. Rather, he and his fellows insist that no other colony is as spiritually important as New England. Indeed, other New Englanders contrast the economic factories of English overseas expansion with the “spirituall factory” of New England, and it is clear that the former should exist to support the latter.¹⁷

The sons of white colonial scions might be the most celebrated (or perhaps just the best documented) of those who traversed the oceangoing circuits that linked the West Indian archipelago to New England, but others came – or rather were forced to go – as well. Enslaved Africans first arrived in New England in 1638. Despite the early presence of enslaved people, New England has often been characterized as a “society with slaves” in contrast to the kind of “slave society” found in colonial Virginia, the Carolinas, or especially Caribbean colonies.¹⁸ But slavery was an

¹⁴ Larry D. Gragg, “A Puritan in the West Indies: The Career of Samuel Winthrop,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 50.4 (October 1993): 768–786. Gragg notes that he “shipped over 20,000 pounds of sugar a year by the early 1660s” (771). On the extended Winthrop family’s fortunes, see Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Liveright Publishing, paperback edition, 2017), 59. As she notes, Samuel “died owning sixty-four slaves.”

¹⁵ John Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal*, “*The History of New England*,” 1630–1649, vol. 1, ed. James Kendall Hosmer (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1908), 333.

¹⁶ Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal*, 333–334.

¹⁷ See Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 33; Kristina Bross, *Future History: Global Fantasies in American and British Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 68. “Spirituell factory” is from John Eliot, *A Late and Further Manifestation of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New-England* (London, 1655), *Early English Books Online*, accessed July 14, 2019.

¹⁸ These are the labels of the influential historian Ira Berlin, quoted in Warren, *New England Bound*, 51.

essential part of New England's economy. It can only be considered insignificant if, as Wendy Warren argues in an important analysis of New England slavery, "the region is examined in isolation."¹⁹ The scholarly exemption of New England from the category of a "slave society" parallels Jacob Vaark's reasoning, which he employs to hold himself innocent from the violence of slavery, even as he plans to enrich himself from the fruits of forced labor. Consequently, the story of New England has largely avoided examination of the "New England Way" of the Atlantic slave trade. We conventionally imagine an Atlantic slave "triangle," in which European colonists in the Americas purchased or exchanged goods for people who had been obtained by English slavers in Africa. Innovating on this system, New England puritans added a fourth leg to the networks of exchange: trading Algonquian prisoners of war for Africans brought to market in the Caribbean.²⁰

In a 1638 entry in his journal, John Winthrop notes the arrival of Captain Peirce of the ship *Desire*, out of Salem, back to New England from a Caribbean trading voyage: "He had been at Providence, and brought some cotton, and tobacco, and negroes, etc. from thence."²¹ If we keep our attention narrowly focused on New England, this date seems a kind of beginning – 1638 is the start of chattel slavery in New England. The introduction of African slavery into New England might even be read as an accident of trade, the result of Peirce's free-wheeling maritime life. He could have encountered the slave trade at any number of ports, without seeking it out. For instance, on a stopover at Tortuga, he "met there two men-of-war, set forth by the lords, etc., of Providence with letters of mart, who had taken divers [*sic*] prizes from the Spaniard, and many negroes."²² An energetic captain such as Peirce couldn't *help* but run into such opportunities to add to his cargo. But if we flip back in the journal for seven months – the date that Winthrop notes Peirce set sail from New England on this voyage – we learn that Peirce's acquisition of enslaved Africans was not some kind of maritime serendipity, but the return on a deliberate choice by New England authorities to take an active role in the

¹⁹ Warren, *New England Bound*, 51.

²⁰ See Warren, *New England Bound*, 36–37 and 106–113, for a detailed discussion of the exchange of Native American and African captives.

²¹ Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, 260. I use Winthrop's spelling of "Peirce." It is sometimes spelled "Pierce" in other sources.

²² Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, 260. Letters of Mart (also "Marque") were authorization for these ships to attack and take possession of ships from other nations, especially for English ships to seize ships of the Spanish treasure fleet.

transatlantic slavery network. In 1637, Peirce set sail with fifteen Pequot boys and two Pequot women, who had been taken prisoner during the Pequot War (1636–1637).²³ Peirce had meant to take them to Bermuda, where he would have exchanged them for African captives, but “missing it, carried them to Providence Isle.”²⁴ One place is as good as another, it seems, either to source slaves or to dump POWs.

So seemingly successful was this course of action in the 1630s that just a few years later, Emmanuel Downing, John Winthrop’s brother-in-law, wrote to him speculating on a future in which such a slave trade would help fulfill New England’s destiny. He writes that if it should happen to fall out that New England would come to be engaged in a “just war” with the Narragansetts, New England would should take the chance to step up the trade begun in the 1630s:

wee might easily haue men woemen and Children enough to exchange for Moores, which wilbe more gaynefull pilladge for vs then we conceive, for I doe not see how wee can thrive vntil wee gett into a stock of slaves sufficient to doe all our buisines, for our Childrens Children will hardly see this great Continent filled with people, soe that our servants will still desire freedome to plant for them selves, and not stay for verie great wages. And I suppose you know verie well how wee shall maynteyne 20 Moores cheaper then one Englishe servant.²⁵

Downing here imagines the entire enterprise of English colonization – *puritan* colonization – of North America to be dependent on the enslaved labor of Africans (“Moores”).²⁶ As in the aftermath of the Pequot War, he imagines that New England authorities could ship Native American

²³ Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal*, 227–228. It is worth a detour to note that however much these prisoners were made to separate from their lands and people, oral tradition continued on. In 2002, the St. David Island Indians, descendants of Pequots, Mohegans, held the first “Reconnection Ceremony” that brought together descendants of mainland North Americans and St. David’s Islanders. See Phoebe Farris, “Indigenous Arts: Homecoming,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine* 32–33 (September 2008), online, accessed July 14, 2019; and Eugen Foggo Simon, “The Legacy of St. David’s Islanders, Bermuda: Their Voices Are Not Silent,” in *The First and the Forced: Essays on the Native American and African American Experience*, ed. James N. Leikner, Kim Warren, and Barbara Watkins (KLW-Webwork: University of Kansas, Hall Center for the Humanities, 2007), 248–268, accessed July 14, 2019.

²⁴ Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal*, 228.

²⁵ Emmanuel Downing to John Winthrop, August 1645, in *The Winthrop Papers*, vol. 5 (1645–1649), published by the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1947. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/winthroppapersv5wint/page/n151>, accessed July 14, 2019.

²⁶ My thanks to Ana Schwartz for drawing my attention to this letter. She analyzes its import in “‘Our Children’s Children’: The Genealogy of Belonging in Early America,” presented as part of the “New England out of New England” roundtable, Society of Early Americanists biennial meeting, Eugene, Oregon, 2019.

prisoners of some future conflict out of New England and exchange them for enslaved Africans as a means of recouping wartime losses. Such a trade would, he imagined, provide a more manageable and cheaper form of labor, and would stave off future trouble that might be caused by a restless English servant class. In addition – alleviating a fear he leaves unspoken – it would ward off the danger of harboring defeated enemies within colonial borders.

Nonetheless, trouble came. And although some of puritan New England's seventeenth-century challenges came from within, serious existential threats were channeled through the Caribbean. As people – Native, English, European, African – moved into, around, and out of New England, so too did their ideas. For the purposes of this anthology, it is not the movement of bodies but the thoughts that came with them, the “leakages” of forbidden knowledge from the Caribbean to New England that are perhaps the most potent force for the shaping of American puritan writings and the creation of the Caribbean as a repressed other to New England.

One of the first, seemingly clear-cut cases of the threat of Caribbean “infection” of New England came in 1656, with the arrival of Quakers in Boston. The “Friends,” as they called themselves, came to warn puritan authorities there of their ecclesiastical and theological errors.²⁷ Theirs was a movement that had been born in England, but they quickly began traveling to spread their beliefs. They found in the Caribbean relatively safe harbors from which to launch their missions.

In 1656 two Quaker English women, Mary Fisher and Anne Austin, left the Friends community in Barbados and shipped to Boston on board the *Swallow*. Bay Colony authorities accused them of witchcraft. Their books and papers were burned. They themselves were arrested, endured an invasive bodily search for witch's marks, and were closely imprisoned. Their cell windows were boarded up to prevent them from preaching to those outside their jail, so seductive were they feared to be. The captain who had transported them was made to return the women at his own expense.²⁸ Over the next five years, as Carla Pestana documents, “at least

²⁷ Gragg, “A Puritan in the West Indies,” 4. For an overview of Quaker history and beliefs, see Pink Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²⁸ Carla Gardina Pestana, “The City upon a Hill under Siege: The Puritan Perception of the Quaker Threat to Massachusetts Bay, 1656–1661,” *New England Quarterly* 56.3 (September 1983): 323–324. For an excellent analysis and meditation on Mary Dyer, the Quaker woman who was hanged, see Anne Myles, “From Monster to Martyr: Re-presenting Mary Dyer,” *Early American Literature* 36.1 (2001): 1–30.

forty Quakers from New England, Rhode Island, and Barbados came to witness against the New England Way.” As she notes, New England authorities spent an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to counter the Quaker threat.²⁹ By 1661, four Quakers who challenged the full intent and extent of New England’s laws against them were hanged, including a man from Barbados.³⁰

Quakers ran afoul of puritan authorities in New England for various beliefs and actions. They rejected notions of predestination and claimed “direct inward encounter with God and revelation.”³¹ They refused to pay church tithes, to swear oaths in court, to doff their hats in churches or in social situations. They were enthusiastic itinerant missionaries, and in the early years of the movement women were nearly as likely as men to speak publicly about the faith.³² There was a widespread, transatlantic network, but the community Quakers established in Barbados was notable. Barbados became something of a safe haven for the Friends. Kristen Block notes that “early elite converts to the Society of Friends in Barbados had sheltered the group from persecution,” and “by 1680 ... more than a thousand men and women joined to worship there in six separate meetinghouses.”³³ Historian Larry Gragg has traced the history of Quakers on the island, arguing that Quakers there “became a critical part of an effective transatlantic network of Friends” and “established what could be considered a ‘counter-culture’ on Barbados.”³⁴

One sign of that “counter culture” was its ambivalent engagement with forced labor. The relationship of Quakers to slavery and to antislavery movements is complex. They are perhaps better known for their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century abolitionist views, but in the seventeenth century, adherents held varying ideas about slavery and Christian duty toward enslaved people. Quakers were slave traders and slaveholders. When George Fox, the founder of the movement, came to Barbados in 1671, as Katherine Gerbner notes, almost all Quaker inhabitants owned

²⁹ As Pestana notes, “for five years the first order of business handled by each session of [the Massachusetts General Court] often involved the sect.” “City upon a Hill,” 325.

³⁰ Pestana, “City upon a Hill,” 345. ³¹ Dandelion, *Quakers*.

³² Dandelion notes that 45 percent of the early Quaker ministry were women.

³³ Kristen Block, “Cultivating Inner and Outer Plantations: Property, Industry, and Slavery in Early Quaker Migration to the New World,” *Early American Studies* 8.3 (Fall 2010): 517.

³⁴ Larry Gragg, *Quaker Community on Barbados: Challenging the Culture of the Planter Class* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009). George Fox took up the issue of slavery during his visit to Barbados in the 1670s and preached to mixed crowds of blacks and whites (ibid., 134–135).

slaves, some claiming more than a hundred.³⁵ Unlike non-Quaker slavers, however, Quakers sought to Christianize the enslaved, a stance that was tolerated – with misgivings – by other settler-colonists on the island. Tolerated, that is, until 1675, when a slave uprising was discovered and brutally put down by colonial planters. In the aftermath of the thwarted rebellion, any activity that allowed the enslaved population a measure of autonomy was suspect.³⁶ Unsurprisingly, in 1676, the Council of Barbados passed a supplement to their slave code according to which “the daily policing of slaves was increased while slaves’ freedom of movement was limited.” Just a month earlier, the Council had also passed an act barring slaves from attending Quaker meetings.³⁷

The 1676 act, recently recovered by Linford D. Fisher, illustrates the close connections – material and ideological – between puritan New England and the Caribbean. The Barbadian slave code not only intensified the policing of enslaved Africans but also aimed to “prohibit the bringing of Indians to this Island.”³⁸ Beginning in the 1620s, “hundreds of Indians were forcibly taken to Barbados from varying locales in the Atlantic world,” including prisoners taken by English puritans during King Philip’s War.³⁹ In the wake of the quelled uprising on Barbados, authorities embraced Atlantic-world conspiracy theories. They regarded the prisoners of war from New England as seasoned fighters against the English, and authorities there passed the act as a means of quarantine against what the governor of Barbados imagined as a “Contagion spreading itself over all the continent from New England.”⁴⁰ Later scholars may see the Caribbean and New England as worlds apart, but English colonists understood themselves to be living in a space crisscrossed by networks of exchange through which colonists, slaves, texts, goods, and dangerous ideas passed.

Once we take seriously the proposition that the Caribbean shaped puritan America, and consequently shaped puritan American literature, what next? A revised history of American puritan literature must ask us to read New England literature through a Caribbean lens and ask which texts have been neglected. One conventional way to trace the advent of New

³⁵ Katherine Gerbner, “The Ultimate Sin: Christianizing Slaves in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century,” *Slavery and Abolition* 31.1 (March 2010): 62.

³⁶ Gerbner analyzes this trend in detail. ³⁷ Gerbner, “The Ultimate Sin,” 66–67.

³⁸ Linford D. Fisher, “‘Dangerous Designs’: The 1676 Barbados Act to Prohibit New England Slave Importation,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 71.1 (January 2014): 99–124.

³⁹ Fisher, “‘Dangerous Designs,’” 107–108.

⁴⁰ Governor Jonathan Atkins to Joseph Williamson, April 3, 1676, quoted in Fisher, “‘Dangerous Designs,’” 117.

England puritan literature is to note that the Massachusetts Bay Colony set up its first printing press in 1639 in Cambridge. Literary historians cite its first productions – the “freemen’s oath” and the *Bay Psalm Book* – as entries in a New England-centered literary history, pertaining to the civil and the ecclesiastical order that we typically associate with the puritan colonies. But the second publication to roll off the press was an almanac for the year 1639, compiled by none other than William Peirce, the ship’s captain who first transported African slaves to Boston from the West Indies. That his almanac, first and foremost a table of weather and tides so valuable to a mariner (or to a slaver), is among the press’s first publications is a testament to the significance of the circulation of people and ideas between New England and the (rest of the) West Indies.⁴¹

For another example, consider a pamphlet printed in 1676, *A Continuation of the State of New England*, a publication that clearly links New England to Barbados. Published anonymously, the tract’s content and authorship demonstrate the close connection of puritans in New England and English settler-colonists in the Caribbean. Most scholarly accounts attribute it to the Massachusetts settler Nathaniel Saltonstall.⁴² The Saltonstall family was influential and well connected in England, New England, and the Caribbean. Saltonstall was a magistrate in Haverhill, Massachusetts, and a reluctant judge in the Salem witch trials. Nathaniel’s grandfather, Sir Richard Saltonstall, was a founding member of the Massachusetts Bay Company and of the Providence Company. Members of a familial branch close to Nathaniel’s (descended from another Sir Richard, who had been Lord Mayor of London) were among the first colonial settlers of Barbados.⁴³ *A Continuation* is the second of three works

⁴¹ Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal*, 293. The *Bay Psalm Book* in particular has been closely studied and reprinted, and is considered a key work of puritan American literature.

⁴² John David Miles argues against the scholarly consensus that N.S., the author of this tract, is Nathaniel Saltonstall, noting that Saltonstall was a magistrate, not a merchant, as N.S. claimed to be, and Saltonstall was in Haverhill rather than Boston during the war. “The Afterlives of King Philip’s War: Negotiating War and Identity in Early America,” PhD dissertation (Duke University, 2009). Though I agree that we need to be cautious about definitively identifying Saltonstall as the author, Saltonstall might have claimed to be both magistrate and merchant, and, as Miles notes himself, he could readily have commented on the war from the port city of Haverhill. Jill Lepore follows others in identifying Saltonstall as the author of three wartime tracts: *The Present State of New-England* in 1675 and both *A Continuation* as well as *A New and Further Narrative* in 1676. See Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 50, for a chart of ephemeral tracts recounting the events of the war.

⁴³ Family tree information taken from Leverett Saltonstall, *Ancestry and Descendants of Sir Richard Saltonstall* (Riverside Press, 1897). Captain Charles Saltonstall brought 200 colonists to the island in 1629. See John Smith, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captain John Smith* (London, 1630), 52.

attributed to Nathaniel Saltonstall that give his account of the colonists' war with an alliance of Algonquian forces headed by Metacom, a war that the English dubbed "King Philip's War." In it, Saltonstall provides what Jill Lepore calls "prurient" details of the conflict, appealing to an English readership hungry for salacious accounts of Indian warfare. Like many such quick, cheaply produced publications, this one is a pastiche. In addition to Saltonstall's stories about the war, readers could also find a list of English casualties, an official account of events released by Edward Rawson (secretary of the Massachusetts Bay Colony), and a transcription of the 1621 agreement in which several sachems purportedly "acknowledge themselves to be the Loyal Subjects of our Sovereign Lord King *James*." ⁴⁴ Finally, the pamphlet includes a letter signed by "G.W." posted from "Spickes-Bay" in Barbados, detailing settler-colonial trials in Barbados, including the foiled 1676 slave revolt and a hurricane that closely followed the discovery of the plot.

It is easy to dismiss texts like this as ephemera – interesting, perhaps for its historical detail, but written in haste and little more than a jumble of information, authors, and genres.⁴⁵ One way to approach it more seriously is to try to link its disparate elements, to find connections among its fragments. But the tract, like so many others in the period, resists such efforts. It *is* polyvocal and disjointed.⁴⁶ We do not need to turn the tract into a tightly knit formal construct for it to be meaningful. Rather, we should look for coherence in the circum-Atlantic space that produced it, a space that is united by physical and discursive networks. So, for instance, we might toggle between the letters describing incidents of the mainland war and the pages describing the rebellion on Barbados and think about how they draw on a common lexicon for settler-colonists to represent violence

⁴⁴ *A Continuation of the State of New England* (London, 1676), 17.

⁴⁵ For a full treatment of the letter from Barbados, see Jerome Handler, "Slave Revolts and Conspiracies in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids/New West Indian Guide* 56.1–2 (1982): 5–42. Miles, who does read the Barbados section of the tract in conversation with Saltonstall's account of New England's war (as well as the other documents included in the full publication), argues that G.W., the Barbados author, works to construct a "grand colonial chain" in which the events in New England and on the island are parallel, making the connection primarily for the benefit of the London reader, for whom the colonies combine to make up the empire's periphery to their metropole (Miles, "The Afterlives of King Philip's War," 95). Rather than considering each piece of the publication separately, Miles looks to the full effect of the tract, arguing that taken together, its disparate parts add up to "a view of community character that is increasingly racialized" (96).

⁴⁶ For an excellent examination of the multivalent form of such writings, see Frances Dolan, *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

and bloodshed. Africans and Indians alike are described as “heathens” (4, 19) who in New England engage in a “conspiracy” (4) and in Barbados a “plot” (19). In both places, they are described as “barbarous” (4, 19) and “Bloody” minded (4, 19). But whereas Algonquians actually carry out their “Bloody Design” (4) and King Philip’s War ensues, on Barbados the enslaved men are thwarted and cannot enact their planned “Bloody Tragedy” (19).

The connections run deeper than common terminology, for the author of the Barbadian letter clearly understands his island’s fate as connected to that of New England. He reports on the hurricane that strikes Barbados as a judgment sent by God because of the colonists’ continued sinfulness, even though they had been saved from rebellion: “we have kicked against God, and slighted the mercy of so great a deliverance.”⁴⁷ The judgment of the hurricane, G.W. tells his reader, “lyeth very heavy on the poorer sort, and none of the Rich excepted.”⁴⁸ G.W. sees New England as in the midst of its own storms, exactly parallel to those he is experiencing on his island. G.W. sees a connection between the huge tempest that leveled pride and houses alike in Barbados and the fate of English settlers in the Bay Colony: “Our fellow subjects in New England have the 28th of the same month tasted of the same Cup, and was very hard put to it this last Summer by one King *Phillip* an *Indian King*” (20). It is important to read carefully here. The “cup” is *not* King Philip’s War, but another hurricane, which hit the coast of New England on August 28, 1675, just three days before the hurricane that hit Spickes Bay and leveled the settlement there.⁴⁹ As G.W. asserts, puritans throughout the West Indies, as well as the people with whom they came in contact, face common trials and threats, from attack of “barbarous heathens” to catastrophic storms. English settlers are together enmeshed in a Caribbean-centered web of God’s providential care, judgment, and environment. Barbados, then, may have been understood by puritans in New England as the site of heterodox beliefs, slave rebellions, and devastating storms, but these all had some point of

⁴⁷ *A Continuation*, 19.

⁴⁸ *A Continuation*, 19.

⁴⁹ David Ludlum, writing for the American Meteorological Society in 1963, assures that if the dates are correct, “there could be no connection between the New England and the Barbados storms.” *Early American Hurricanes, 1496–1870* (Boston: American Meteorological Society, 1963), 16. Far be it from me to contradict such a skilled meteorologist, so I will note only that the storm hit Barbados just three days after wreaking destruction in New England, and G.W. *does* say that the hurricane came out of the northwest (19). See Ludlum’s obituary for a sense of his dedication to unearthing historic weather information: Robert Mcg. Thomas, Jr., “David Ludlum, Weather Expert, Dies at 86,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1997, www.nytimes.com/1997/05/29/nyregion/david-ludlum-weather-expert-dies-at-86.html.

connection to puritan New England. Moreover, as G.W.'s understanding of the hurricane on Barbados makes clear, New England puritans were not the only settler colonists to see themselves as having a particular relationship with God, nor the only ones to see themselves in jeremidical terms, as being subject particularly to God's favor and God's judgment. When we disregard Barbados's significance – the significance as a whole of the Caribbean to New England puritanism – we run the risk of accepting the story of exceptionalism that puritan settler-colonists told themselves.

Perhaps the most notorious moment in seventeenth-century puritan America is the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692, the Caribbean roots of which are not always considered carefully. Salem's magical practices were a mix of English folk techniques and Christian superstition, made especially potent by the admixture of African and Indigenous rituals.⁵⁰ Tituba, who was first accused of witchcraft (and who confessed to it), was an enslaved woman from Barbados. And her Barbadian background was particularly suspect. As we have seen, the island had for decades been looked upon by New England authorities as a source of infection. If we consider the Salem witchcraft trials a Caribbean as well as a New England phenomenon, we gain a new purchase on the events and the literature that emerged from that moment – we even “discover” new narratives. Tituba, of course, has long been recognized as central to the trials. But her significance is better documented in later literature than in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. For readers familiar with Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* or Maryse Conde's historical fiction *Moi Tituba, Socière . . . Noire de Salem* (*I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*), it seems impossible to miss Tituba's role and significance. But in her own time, accounts of Salem slighted or overlooked her completely. Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*, a defense of New England's handling of the witchcraft trials, does not reference her at all. His father, Increase Mather, offered his own account, entitled *Cases of Conscience*, which alludes to Tituba, but not by name, describing her only as “Mr. Parris's Indian.”⁵¹ We might see Tituba's neglect by both Mathers as an indication that they did not see

⁵⁰ For sources and analysis of witchcraft in the Atlantic World context, see Elaine Breslaw, ed., *Witches of the Atlantic World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

⁵¹ Increase Mather, *Cases of Conscience* (Boston, 1693), 8. Robert Calef, who wrote *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (London, 1700) as a critique of the official Bay Colony story of the trials, does name Tituba (91). Both *Cases of Conscience* and *More Wonders* are available online through *Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project*, project director, Benjamin C. Ray, University of Virginia, <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/home.html>, accessed July 14, 2019.

her role as significant, that the Caribbean influence on Salem is slight. But before we come to that conclusion, we should consider other reasons for her disappearance. For instance, if the Mathers had focused on Tituba's Barbadian upbringing, they would also have needed to account for her master's sojourn on the island and perhaps even to have interrogated the wisdom of relying on African and Caribbean slave labor. Samuel Parris, the minister whose family first evidenced signs of possession, had been a planter on the island – Tituba was in New England because he brought her with him when he uprooted himself from Barbados and replanted himself in New England.

We dismiss the Caribbean's significance to the Salem trials and to contemporary publication about them at our peril. Reading the trial transcripts attuned to their circum-Atlantic contexts yields important insights. Several of those who were accused or were witnesses in the trials had roots in Barbados. In addition to Parris and Tituba, we learn that Parris also brought Tituba's husband, John Indian, from the island. An English woman named Margaret Hawkes, who was among the accused, had also come from Barbados, and at least two other enslaved women came from the island, including a woman named Candy, who belonged to Hawkes and was accused alongside her.⁵²

The fleeting appearance of Candy in the print archives of Salem is particularly important. Such archival evidence of the experiences of enslaved people is difficult to locate, if it even exists. Literary scholars must be willing to read more generously, to be open to piecemeal and circumstantial print evidence if we are to understand more fully the puritan world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In *Creole Testimonies*, Nicole N. Aljoe suggests an important method for such an approach. She argues for the "poetics of fragmentation" as a means to decolonize colonial literature.⁵³ She searches the texts of colonizers for the mediated, "embedded" narratives that she persuasively argues constituted the genre of British West Indian slave narratives. That such narratives exist as fragments or are contained within the bounds of other texts should not be seen only as a limitation or diminishment of their significance. Rather,

⁵² The *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, which include notes from the 1692 trials, originally edited by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nisenbaum, is available through the *Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive*, <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/category/swp.html>, accessed July 14, 2019. Mary Black is also described as an enslaved African, but if she had a connection to Barbados, it is not mentioned.

⁵³ She draws on poet M. NourbeSe Philip for this phrase. See Nicole N. Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709–1838* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 19.

as fragments, they generate a “haunting and generative aesthetic power.”⁵⁴ If we extend this approach to the Salem witch trials, we may be able to see Tituba’s testimony as just such a generative fragment.⁵⁵ But even more, we can read Candy’s testimony as “the fragment that crosses and confounds generic boundaries and subjectivities,” a flexibility that is “engendered by the creole culture of the West Indian Caribbean.”⁵⁶

Like others among the accused, Candy is brought before the court and made to answer a basic question: “Candy! are you a witch?” Rather than answering directly, Candy asserts that “*Candy* no witch in her country. *Candy*’s mother no witch. *Candy* no witch, Barbados.”⁵⁷ Cassander Smith reads Candy’s response as a repudiation of the idea that Barbados is a polluted place from which polluted individuals propagate and, when transported to New England, bring contagion with them.⁵⁸ Smith provides a close and detailed reading of Candy’s testimony, affording it the kind of careful literary analysis rarely extended to such fragmentary bits of archival information. The result is a picture of a woman who understands her circumstances and draws on sophisticated rhetorical tools to respond. Candy rewrites the narrative offered to her, testifying that she came to New England innocent of the practice of witchcraft and that her English mistress introduced it to her. In fact, we might even read her assertion that neither she nor her mother was a witch in Barbados as a suggestion that the enslaved community in Barbados protected her from the devil’s temptations. Her questioners may have had a similar idea in mind. They ask, “Did your mistress make you a witch in this country?” Her answer, “Yes, in this country mistress give *Candy* witch.” After all, Margaret Hawkes had come from Barbados, too. Only once she got Candy away from her family and was brought to labor in New England was the mistress able to “give *Candy* witch.”⁵⁹

Once we identify Candy’s testimony as an embedded slave narrative, we have a means to include new places and voices within American literary

⁵⁴ Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies*, 19.

⁵⁵ Which is not to say that it offers *no* insight, just that the frame is particularly hard to distinguish from her testimony. For me, there is more insight to be gained about her life by learning that Parris refuses to ransom her from prison and that she disappears from the archival record after she is purchased by another, unnamed English colonist.

⁵⁶ Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies*, 19.

⁵⁷ “Examination of Candy,” July 4, 1692, *Salem Witchcraft Papers* 23.2, <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n23.html#n23.2>, accessed July 14, 2019. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁸ Cassander L. Smith, “‘Candy No Witch in Her Country’: What One Enslaved Woman’s Testimony during the Salem Witch Trials Can Tell Us about Early American Literature,” in *Early Modern Black Diaspora Studies: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Cassander L. Smith, Nicholas R. Jones, and Miles P. Grier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 107–136.

⁵⁹ “Examination of Candy.”

history. The editing collaborative of the Early Caribbean Digital Archive (ECDA) builds on *Creole Testimonies*, working to decolonize the archive by “re-archiving (remixing and reassembling) materials from existing archives as well as archiving new materials.”⁶⁰ In particular, the ECDA extracts embedded slave narratives from their sources and publishes them separately from their original textual frames. Although Candy’s story does not (yet) appear in the ECDA, we can adopt the ECDA approach in our consideration of puritan American literary history. And thus, “instead of (only) reproducing the authorial status” of its container text (in this case, the Salem witchcraft trial records), we can now list Candy “in the identifying category of author.” Disembedded, her story is not that of a puritan American; she has authored a text that is meaningful apart from the uproar of puritan witch frenzy in Salem.

But recognizing Candy as an author also has an effect on the puritan American literary tradition. Puritan American literature looks *sui generis*, or at least appears to be solely an English transatlantic creation, only when considered apart from the rest of the early modern world, and in particular apart from the Caribbean.⁶¹ A full understanding of puritan American literature requires us to take what David Armitage terms a “cis-Atlantic” approach. That is, we must consider New England, Providence Island, Barbados, and other Atlantic locations (including the maritime) as “unique locations within an Atlantic world” and “to define that uniqueness as the result of the interaction between local particularity and a wider web of connections (and comparisons).”⁶² Tackling Candy’s testimony from this perspective is a bit like figuring out an optical illusion. From a parochial point of view, one that is centered on New England as *the* place of puritan American literature, she is hidden in the overall picture. But once seen, she is impossible to unsee. Candy’s narrative may be a fragment, but its recognition and extraction from the archives not only gives her a voice in the historical and literary record; it also undoes the sense that puritan American literature is produced only by English settler-colonists perched precariously on a small stretch of land on coastal North America.

⁶⁰ Early Caribbean Digital Archive (ECDA), “Decolonizing the Archive: Remix and Reassembly,” <https://ecda.northeastern.edu/home/about/decolonizing-the-archive/>, accessed May 13, 2019.

⁶¹ Or apart from transoceanic and global connections, as Michelle Burnham explores in Chapter 6 in this volume.

⁶² David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 21. Armitage’s three concepts are “transatlantic,” “cis-Atlantic,” and “circum-Atlantic.” Armitage defines the “trans-Atlantic” as a comparative approach and “circum-Atlantic” as dealing with all of the peoples who traversed the Atlantic.

CHAPTER 6

Global America

Michelle Burnham

When Thomas Hyde, the English orientalist scholar, translated the New Testament into the Malayan language in 1677, he dedicated the book to Robert Boyle.* We most often remember Boyle as the scientist who undertook the famous air pump experiment, as well as for his contributions to chemistry and natural philosophy more generally. But he was also a longtime advocate of translation projects around the world. More than a decade before Hyde's Malay translation, Boyle sponsored the 1661 translation into Arabic of Grotius's *De veritate religionis christianae*. The translator was Edward Pococke, an Anglican chaplain who during the 1630s had been stationed in Aleppo, Syria, with the Levant Company. While Levant Company merchants organized and pursued trade between England and the Ottoman Empire, their chaplain Pococke collected Arabic texts and manuscripts and became expert in its language. He would later return to London to take up a chair in Arabic created for him at Oxford University by Archbishop Laud. When Pococke died in 1691, his position at Oxford went to Hyde.¹

The seventeenth-century Arabic and Malayan translations were both facilitated by Boyle, who never traveled to Indonesia, Syria, or any other of the far-flung locations around the globe where he campaigned for trans-linguistic work. He supported these projects and publications from

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¹ Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 114–115. Alison Games notes that while Pococke was the most distinguished of the Levant Company chaplains who “went on to have distinguished careers as scholars who specialized in Semitic languages or sacred texts,” these also included John Luke (Smyrna), Henry Denton (Istanbul), Thomas Smith (Istanbul), and Robert Huntington (Aleppo). Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 231. While the Levant Company ministers collected and translated manuscripts, their puritan colonial minister counterparts tended to be focused instead on reshaping colonial churches (233).

London, where he served on the Court of Committees that oversaw the East India Company, of which he was a member. Boyle's interest in translation moved through the channels of global merchant companies, and it reached as far westward as it did eastward. As Philip J. Stern observes, Boyle modeled his translation initiatives with the Levant and East India Companies on the North American example of the New England Company.² In the dedication that opens his Malay translation, Hyde describes Boyle as "one of the directors of the East India Company for trade, and governor of the corporation for the propagation of the Gospel, and the conversion of the American natives in New England."³ It was in the latter role that Boyle undertook a correspondence with the puritan John Eliot, whose translation of the Bible into Algonquin appeared in 1663, not long after Pococke's Arabic translation. Two decades after the subsequent Hyde translation appeared, Boyle and Eliot were still corresponding. As Wendy Warren has shown, the New England missionary wrote then to his London supporter seeking help to secure the release of enslaved Native Americans who, after being captured in New England during King Philip's War, had been transported for sale to Tangiers in North Africa. Eliot's appeal to Boyle was not successful.⁴

In 1691, the year Hyde took up Pococke's position in Arabic at Oxford, the London Court of Committees on which Boyle served also instructed Elihu Yale, then-governor of the East India Company in Madras, to ensure that weekly prayers and sermons at the city's Protestant church were offered in Portuguese – at least until sufficient funds were raised to establish a Portuguese-language church, hire a Portuguese-speaking minister, and translate the Book of Common Prayer into Portuguese. These coordinated efforts were designed to reach "the Protestant black people & Portuguese & the slaves who serve them, who have now no place to hear the word of God preached in a language they understand & therefore are necessitated to go to the Popish churches."⁵ These plans did not succeed any more than Eliot's appeal to Boyle on behalf of the captured and enslaved Native Americans did. And it was not long in any case before Yale was deposed as governor in Madras. He left behind in

² Stern, *The Company-State*, 114.

³ Thomas Hyde (trans.), *Jang empat Evangelia derri tuan kita Jesu Christi, daan Berboatan derri lang Apostoli bersacti, Bersalin Dallam Bassa Malyo, That is, the four Gospels of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Acts of the Holy Apostles* (Oxford, 1677).

⁴ Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2016), 97–98.

⁵ Quoted in Stern, *The Company-State*, 115.

India a reputation as an especially ruthless and corrupt merchant but took with him an immense fortune.

The wealth he amassed in Asia he more famously spent in America, where Yale's donations helped fund the college in New Haven, Connecticut, that bears his name, a college established by dissenting puritans.⁶ By then, New Haven's first governor, the puritan Theophilus Eaton, had long since been buried in the town green. Prior to founding New Haven, Eaton had been a patent holder and president of the Massachusetts Bay Company, but, like Yale, his considerable fortune had been accrued earlier, while living abroad as a merchant – in this case not in Madras, India, with the East India Company, but in Copenhagen, Denmark, with the Eastland Company, which traded with the Baltic states.⁷ But the global reach of Connecticut's origins go back further still: it was established by the puritan minister Thomas Hooker, who was a client of Robert Rich, the Earl of Warwick. Warwick was an investor in the East India Company and also held positions in all three Atlantic puritan colonial projects: the Bermuda, Providence Island, and New England Companies.⁸ Warwick's investments and projects ran through these distant locations, although, like Boyle, he never traveled to any of them.

The networks described in the paragraphs above connect London, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, New England, and North Africa through intersecting commercial, religious, political, and intellectual commitments. These networks are populated by scholars, scientists, and slaves, as well as missionaries, merchants, and ministers. Their connections reveal relationships – between translation and conversion, commerce and religion, and English and Native peoples – that span from Malaysia to Massachusetts. While there are American puritans in these networks, puritanism is no more exclusive to the logic of these relations than America is to their geography; while the coordinates of puritanism and America sometimes, but not always, overlap with each other within these networks, they also intersect, independently or together, with multiple other coordinates. In this chapter, I am primarily interested in identifying ways to recover the kinds of multilayered global contexts described in the paragraphs above and to bring those to bear on the way we understand American literary and cultural history and the role of puritanism in it.

⁶ Stern, *The Company-State*, 115. See also Gauri Viswanathan, "Yale College and the Culture of British Imperialism," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7 (1994): 1–30.

⁷ Warren, *New England Bound*, 176–177.

⁸ Karen Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630–1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12–13, 296.

In order to do so, I have deliberately avoided two impulses: focusing on a global community of puritans with connections to America, and foregrounding the global connections of puritans residing in America. Such a community and such connections may at times emerge in what follows (and even perhaps begin to do so in the two short scenarios sketched out above). However, privileging these runs the risk of reasserting the narrative monopoly puritanism has traditionally held on early American literary and cultural history, with the result especially of casting that long narrative in a mold shaped by seventeenth-century New England puritan writing and thinking. I am interested instead in pursuing a global alternative, organized around new protagonists, plots, and perspectives that might break up that narrative monopoly.

In her 2003 book on the Atlantic puritan colony of Providence Island, Karen Kupperman rightly claims that “we have artificially cut up the early English colonial effort into hermetically sealed little units,” with the result that we have failed to see “massive evidence of an integrated colonial vision that was widely shared on both sides of the Atlantic.”⁹ Scholars have since then become considerably more accustomed to imagining colonial New England in far less geographically isolated ways, especially in the Atlantic context. Yet the narrative importance of New England remains persistently naturalized and magnified in curricula and textbooks that cover the colonial period.¹⁰ Despite Kupperman’s commanding work, for example, Providence Island remains as absent today from the public imagination of early American history as it always has been, and writings and figures from it are nowhere to be seen in the anthologies and surveys designed and used to teach early American literature.

This failure to recognize multiple English colonial “units” and to dissolve the separations between them is the result, in part, of the narrative power granted to the single unit of New England, whose puritan settlers have consistently been cast as forerunners to the national American stage, despite the fact that they were relative latecomers to the global stage. Of course, one might reasonably ask: If we have not yet succeeded in yoking together such “sealed” colonial units as New England, Virginia, Barbados, Bermuda, and Providence Island into an Atlantic whole, how will we possibly integrate them within a global framework that reaches to Asia

⁹ Kupperman, *Providence Island*, ix.

¹⁰ See especially the transformative work of such scholars as Francis Bremer, Jonathan Beecher Field, Stephen Foster, David D. Hall, Phillip Round, Laura Stevens, Teresa Toulouse, and many others. See also the recent special issue of *American Literature* coedited by Sarah Rivett, Cristobal Silva, and Abram Van Engen.

and its Pacific and Indian Ocean worlds? If we want to encompass the kinds of histories and networks identified in the paragraphs above, it is not enough to stretch further, or with greater muscle, the stories that currently organize the period. The narrative putty that binds these stories seems able to stretch only so far into new and wider configurations before springing back into more familiar shapes and terms. And when it does, we lose sight once again of Providence Island, Bermuda, and Barbados, much less Syria, Madras, and Malaysia. It is almost as if that putty is made up of some kind of narrative epoxy whose ingredients add to the otherwise glutinous resin of history the hardening agent of national desire, producing a binding effect that is remarkably resistant to change. In what follows, I nominate a trio of terms that might serve as the building blocks for a new, global, and anti-exceptionalist narrative of early American literature and history. Drawn from the scenarios that opened this chapter, these terms are companies, violence, and translation.

Companies

Long ago, Rudolph Robert insisted that as the English ventured both eastward and westward around the globe, they drew from prior experiences in both directions.¹¹ Citing such examples as the Virginia colonist William Strachey – who compared trade with the American Indians to trade with Turkey and the East Indies – Robert accurately notes that “Virginia was launched in a world of trade whose center still lay east in the Mediterranean and Asia.” Investors and settlers alike built the Virginia Company, in other words, on global fantasies, imagining it as a trading venture comparable to those in the East.¹² Tellingly, Robert’s book is a history neither of early America nor of English colonialism, but of the chartered company. Such a focus on chartered and joint-stock companies offers, I suggest, one way to position early American literary and cultural history in global terms, by insisting on the corporate foundations that North American colonialism – including puritan New England – shared with English efforts around the world.

¹¹ Rudolph Robert, *Chartered Companies and Their Role in the Development of Overseas Trade* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1969), 126. Robert observes that “Virginia came to define an intensive style of colonization that characterized English settlement in North America and the Caribbean and that departed from the trade model pervasive almost everywhere else the English went. Virginia may have established a pattern of colonization in North America and in the Caribbean, but it was an anomaly among English overseas ventures at the time” (120).

¹² Robert, *Chartered Companies*, 128, 117, 118.

A version of Kupperman's argument about the artificial hermeticism of English colonies in the Atlantic has recently been applied to the globe by historians who argue for a dismantling of the long-standing bifurcation between the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds. This geographical division has spawned two distinct narratives whose seemingly incompatible terms have prevented scholars from recognizing the connections between them. One of those narratives emphasizes English *colonialism* in the Atlantic, while the other foregrounds English *trade* in the Indian and Pacific worlds. Because these separate plots are pinned to separate geographies, they have, as Alison Games argues, obscured the "circular connections between trade and settlement" that would allow us to see the English project of the Atlantic plantation colony in the context of the global and transoceanic "trading world that produced it." Games constructs out of that global context an alternative narrative populated by a diverse group of seventeenth-century English cosmopolitans whose exposure to travel narratives, investment opportunities, and imported commodities encouraged a thirst for long-distance travel and private enterprise.¹³ Puritans were among that group of English cosmopolitans.

Philip J. Stern likewise challenges this hemispheric dichotomy between Asia and America, though in ways that more explicitly foreground the global importance of the early modern commercial company. He calls into question "an Atlantic history that fails to account for either enduring connections with Asia or the myriad commercial, political, and legal regimes, like the Company, that recast the borders of the 'Atlantic' and 'Asia' in the first place." Stern argues instead that the seventeenth century was characterized by a political mixture of "empire, globalization, hybridity, and fragmentation" carried out through a variety of overlapping corporate forms, including an East India Company that operated as a "Company-State" which resembled a body politic as much as it did a commercial business.¹⁴ Only later were these myriad early modern corporate forms absorbed by an upstart and rival form of corporation, the nation-state, which has since, Stern argues, so thoroughly dominated our imaginations that it has made it impossible for us to recognize its earlier precedents. The global geographical deconstruction offered by

¹³ Games, *Web of Empire*, 181, 12, 14, cites H. V. Bowen.

¹⁴ Stern, *The Company-State*, 3, 213, 214. Like Games, Stern offers a global narrative about the making of British empire that "defies the usual distinctions between a 'colonial' Atlantic and a 'trading world' of Asia."

Games and Stern – paired with the Atlantic dissolution advocated by Kupperman – calls for a narrative of the period animated less by specific regions (or, for that matter, by specific religious or linguistic traditions) than by the hybrid multi-corporatism of the early modern globe, including commercial companies.

Such a framework quickly reveals that puritans in America – whether they arrived under the auspices of the New England, Providence Island, Bermuda, or Virginia Companies – were relative latecomers to what had already been, by the early part of the 1600s, a century-long effort at English overseas expansion. Although England had long sought to compete with Spain in such global pursuits, English expansion efforts were more immediately driven by a crisis in the cloth trade, which inspired aggressive searches for new export markets around the world. The resulting overseas ventures were made possible by the innovative financing model of the chartered joint-stock company. Unlike the Spanish model of empire-building that relied on a central powerful crown, joint-stock companies were made up of “private investors with royal monopolies” that made it possible to finance “expensive and risky overseas ventures from India to America.”¹⁵

The first joint-stock chartered company in England was the Russia (or Muscovy) Company, created in 1553 in order to fund an expedition to reach the East through a supposed Northwest Passage. The Company collectivized financial risk by spreading it out among a group of merchants hoping for returns on their investment. The voyage failed miserably, although its few survivors did successfully establish trade relations with the Russians, on whose northern coast they found themselves stranded. The model that financed the trip subsequently flourished as a way to facilitate English commercial expansion around the world throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁶ In 1585, joint-stock companies under Elizabeth even underwrote privateering expeditions in the Atlantic

¹⁵ Games, *Web of Empire*, 7.

¹⁶ Robert, *Chartered Companies*, 14–15. Robert furthermore explains that the Merchant Adventurers, chartered by Henry VII in 1505 as a monopoly on the cloth trade, was the predecessor to the joint-stock company and differed from its successors by requiring its “members to trade individually, each providing his own capital, bearing the brunt of his own losses and retaining his own profits” (24). The Merchant Adventurers essentially constituted a monopoly that restricted membership (basely largely on birthright or purchase or apprenticeship) and enforced conformity to established religion as one of its guidelines (25–26). The joint-stock company model thrived until it was banned, by the Bubble Act of 1720, in the wake of the South Sea Company disaster.

and Caribbean, while Drake took such efforts into the Pacific.¹⁷ The East India Company – founded in 1599 but reorganized in 1600 around a collective rather than individual financing model – meanwhile established a maritime trade route between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to import commodities such as silks, currants, and spices from India and the East.

When the first minister on Providence Island, the puritan Lewis Morgan, imagined the American Atlantic as a location that would grow cloves, pepper, nutmeg, and mace, he was explicitly promoting the colony as an alternative to East Indian commerce, much as William Strachey did Virginia.¹⁸ English Atlantic plantations, in other words, were actively imagined within a global world of transoceanic trade. Colonization efforts in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds often developed in dialogue with each other as well. The puritan Robert Hunt, who served as governor of the Providence Island Company, drew from his experience in the West Indies when he later led the establishment of the Assada colony in Madagascar, modeling it explicitly on the example of Barbados. But his sources were even more global than that, as Hunt also compared Assada to English Virginia, Portuguese Goa, and Dutch Batavia.¹⁹ Calcified geographic divisions produce stories that prevent us from seeing the global connections that informed these projects, their participants, and their writing.

As the opening examples of the London-based Boyle and Warwick suggest, those who invested in joint-stock companies also tended to do so on a global scale, choosing most often to invest in several companies at once to diversify their assets and increase their chances of recouping or multiplying their capital. Approximately a third of the investors in the Levant Company, for example, were also members of the East India Company. Leadership within these companies also entailed substantial overlap, as the example of Sir Thomas Smythe attests: he was governor of the Muscovy Company, governor of the Levant Company, governor of the East India Company, and treasurer of the Virginia Company. In addition to these four commitments, he also invested in the French,

¹⁷ See the discussion by Robert Brenner, who notes that when war between Spain and England broke out in 1587–1588, privateering became a way to access Brazilian sugar with a success never seen through other means. Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653* (London: Verso, 2003), 19. The merchants involved with these enterprises were already, in the late sixteenth century, eager to intervene in the Portuguese-controlled sugar trade in Brazil.

¹⁸ Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 14, 33. ¹⁹ Games, *Web of Empire*, 181, 209, 211.

Northwest Passage, and Bermuda Companies.²⁰ The Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean worlds came together in the early modern portfolios of such men, such that the story of any one company is often a story of many companies, especially as so many of these were restructured after experiences of previous financial failure.

The Massachusetts Bay Company, for instance, combined the assets of the previously failed Dorchester Company (associated with John White, who helped to secure patents for both of these companies and wrote the 1630 promotional tract *Planters Plea*) with the land grant of the earlier New England Company. It was Warwick who managed this land grant transfer through his role on the Council of New England (the body that supported the Sir Ferdinando Gorges venture of the Popham Colony in Maine, and from whose complicated history figures like Ma-re Mount's Thomas Morton emerged). Warwick would later become governor of the Bermuda Company and coordinated relations between it, Providence Island, and Massachusetts Bay, while simultaneously investing in the East India Company.²¹

As the above examples suggest, a focus on companies and their networks dissolves the geographical separations that obscure these connections. That dissolution in turn brings attention to figures whose location, or whose movement between regions, has historically made them less visible or less legible. The first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company, for example, the puritan Matthew Craddock, remains entirely overshadowed in literary and cultural histories by his successor, John Winthrop. Craddock's commercial entanglements were global: in addition to the Massachusetts Bay Company, he was also a member of the Bermuda Company and became one of the first merchants to introduce American tobacco into markets in the faraway Levant. He did so, moreover, as an interloper violating the Levant Company's monopoly on trade in the region. Robert Brenner has shown that powerful Levant–East India merchants regularly excluded from the markets they controlled less-established merchants like Craddock. Puritans, Brenner notes, were overwhelmingly among this

²⁰ Games, *Web of Empire*, 83. See also John Butman and Simon Targett, *New World, Inc.: The Making of America by England's Merchant Adventurers* (New York: Little, Brown, 2018), 217.

²¹ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 276–279. The inclusion of Thomas Morton in anthologies of American literature has hinged exclusively on his conflict with Plymouth Plantation, represented by the textual battle between the segments of his *New English Canaan* and William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* that play out that battle. As I have argued elsewhere, this approach has led scholars to overlook the rest of these texts and their Atlantic and global financial contexts. See Michelle Burnham, *Folded Selves: Colonial New England Writing in the World System* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2007).

second group, and the resulting conflict, he argues, helped to fuel “the political and ideological struggles in London during the Civil War.”²²

The cloth trade crisis that triggered merchant investment in so many of these joint-stock ventures also led to the diaspora of workers from England’s textile industry. These included the many puritans who migrated from Holland to North America, among whom were the well-known Leyden group of “pilgrims” who emigrated as part of the Plymouth Company, and those puritans who emigrated from Amsterdam as part of the Virginia Company. As April Lee Hatfield has shown, by 1622, upward of 300 puritans arrived from Amsterdam to settle on Edward Bennett’s plantation south of the James River, a number that later doubled.²³ Her research on Virginia puritans exposes the ways in which geographical divisions become reinforced through narrative conventions. The telescopic focus within dominant narratives of American literary and cultural history on the migrants from Holland to Plymouth Plantation in New England makes it challenging to recognize and incorporate those puritans simultaneously migrating to Bennett’s plantation in Virginia. Meanwhile, because the narrative plot about Plymouth’s settlers is conventionally constructed around their pursuit of religious freedom, Plymouth’s status as a joint-stock company – and the pressures and motivations associated with that status – are obscured. Once we recognize that puritans moved across the Atlantic under the auspices of companies (including not only the Plymouth and Virginia Companies but also the Dorchester, New England, Providence Island, Bermuda Companies, and more), we can begin to ask how their intertwined colonial and trade relations, networks, and experiences (which included both puritans and nonpuritans) compare with similarly organized companies in the Indian and Pacific Ocean worlds.

An emphasis on the company and its intertwined practices of commercial trade and colonial settlement therefore counteracts the isolation of New England and other English Atlantic colonies both from each other

²² Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 169, 89. For the earlier history of this tension, see also Robert, who explains that while some criticized the Merchant Adventurers for constituting an elite group of wealthy and autocratic men, the Merchant Adventurers themselves criticized those called “interlopers” – merchants outside their own group and network who were nonetheless permitted to trade in some cities (such as Amsterdam) where they presumed to hold a monopoly. These interlopers in turn insisted that their system of free trade encouraged more trade and better ships (Robert, *Chartered Companies*, 33).

²³ Meanwhile, puritan ministers might find themselves shipped from one Atlantic settlement to another; in response to requests for clergymen, Governor John Winthrop sent ministers from various New England towns to Virginia, Barbados, and other Caribbean islands. April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 115–116.

and from the rest of the globe. The plots that structure our narratives of these separate regions have been similarly alienated from each other, often depending on oppositions that do not hold up especially well once our lens is widened transoceanically. Christopher Hodgkins observes, for example, that “it is only in comparison to the superbiblicists of Boston” that the Virginia colony’s “founding rhetoric can be thought even relatively ‘secular’ since it is entirely theocentric by any measure other than New England puritanism.”²⁴ Games similarly remarks that religion has been unduly emphasized in histories of early New England in comparison to other English overseas ventures. She points out that “ministers were everywhere” and “accompanied every phase of English expansion,” well beyond the Atlantic.²⁵

As Andrew Fitzmaurice has argued, “clergy had always held prominent positions in the promotion of English colonial projects,” and the examples of the Virginia, Newfoundland, Plymouth, and Bermuda Companies all show that ministers routinely served as company propagandists, especially through the vehicle of the sermon.²⁶ In such a context, John Winthrop’s hyper-canonical lay sermon “A Modell of Christian Charity” emerges less as a proto-national vision of American exceptionalism and more as a promotional effort on behalf of the Massachusetts Bay Company, which responded to the different kinds of risks taken on by investors and settlers. As Scott Michaelsen has argued, Winthrop’s audience for the sermon included, on the one hand, the larger community bound for Boston, made up of rich and poor, and, on the other, a smaller group of wealthy company investors concerned about returns. Winthrop’s own rhetorical effort to collapse these two distinct groups into a single one has been

²⁴ Christopher Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire: Protestant Colonialism and Conscience in British Literature* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 119. Hodgkins goes on to call John Rolfe’s letter to Governor Dale “as profoundly Calvinist in its way” as the sensibility of John Winthrop.

²⁵ Games, *Web of Empire*, 220, 221. Games also insists that there is no single story to be told here, because although the church was the “only national institution that English companies consistently transported overseas,” the clergy themselves were so “deeply fragmented” that they could provide no uniformity to overseas ventures (223, 253). Kupperman, too, insists that religious belief and economic success were imagined as intertwined and mutually supportive; for the puritan Providence Island planners, “[t]here was no tension in their minds between the genuine patriotism and religious concern that motivated them and the personal enrichment they hoped would flow to them from the project’s success.” This orientation precisely mirrored that of the New England puritan Edward Winslow, who described profit and religion as “jump[ing] together” in America (Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 18; quoting *Good Newes from New England*, 64).

²⁶ Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of English Colonisation, 1500–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89, 95, 132.

replicated, Michaelsen argues, by historians and literary critics ever since.²⁷ The national narrative established by this misreading has in turn shaped the public reception of American literary history ever since. What might Winthrop's sermon look like in a global spatial framework instead that encourages us to read his text alongside sermons produced elsewhere – not only in Virginia, Newfoundland, and Bermuda but also in Indonesia, Syria, and Madras?

Winthrop's message about greed should perhaps also be placed within a humanistic tradition that shaped English sermons in the colonial and company context well beyond New England. Fitzmaurice recognizes that "the ascetic aspect of humanism, the scepticism of luxury" seemed "more fitting to puritan thrift than to the aristocracy," but he goes on to point out that nonpuritan colonial promoters routinely "cautioned against greed" because, despite its power as a motivation for investment and settlement, it also posed a central danger of corruption.²⁸ Insisting that historians have "focused on the colony to the neglect of the Company," Fitzmaurice identifies in sermons and other Company-sponsored literature a "particular blend of civic thought" that "rejected profit as a corruption of the pursuit of the common good" and that was organized around the central humanistic principle that "virtue and the active political life of the citizen is necessary to secure the common good." This position, he notes, is not easy to reconcile with the assumption that the "Company was purely a business enterprise."²⁹

Christopher Hodgkins foregrounds this same tradition when he observes that the "Reformation would draw much of its attack upon the vices of the church from the humanist language of corruption." He furthermore suggests that Protestant religion and humanist philosophy intersected when they met with the dilemmas of English colonialism and its effects around the world. Hodgkins positions the English puritan poet John Milton, for example, at precisely such an intersection, where he emerges as a reluctant imperialist for whom the "antidote to evil empire was good empire, rather than none at all."³⁰ Bringing this framework to

²⁷ Scott Michaelsen, "John Winthrop's 'Modell' Covenant and the Company Way," *Early American Literature* 27.2 (1992): 89–90.

²⁸ Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America*, 19.

²⁹ Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America*, 69. Fitzmaurice's claim that the Virginia Company was a political as much as a commercial project echoes in some ways Stern's argument about the East India Company.

³⁰ Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire*, 23, 66.

bear on the tradition of Weberian scholarship might complicate governing narratives about the relationship between American puritanism and capitalism.³¹

Violence

A focus on companies encourages a more global orientation to early American literary and cultural history that continues to include puritanism and New England without overprivileging either one. But the example of a recent volume on the role of merchant companies in early American history makes it clear that such a focus cannot alone dislodge the narrative epoxy-effect discussed at the outset of this chapter. *New World, Inc.: The Making of America by England's Merchant Adventurers*, written by business journalists John Butman and Simon Targett, argues that Plymouth's pilgrims were falsely installed as the first chapter of a story about America whose earlier chapters have since gone missing. Those earlier chapters begin for Butman and Targett with the English cloth trade crisis, and they tell a decidedly global narrative characterized above all by repeated financial failures and losses. Thomas Smythe, the London merchant with multiple company investments and especially close ties to the East India and Virginia Companies, emerges as the central heroic figure of their revised history, because it was Smythe's unrelenting and creative efforts to continue pouring material resources into the financial disaster that was the Virginia Company that saved England's hitherto disastrous investments in the North American colonial project.

This promising effort adds significant global complexity and historical depth to the story of North American English colonialism, but the effort unfortunately succumbs to the epoxy effect of national desire. Butman and Targett ultimately renew rather than reject a tired American exceptionalism. They do so by replacing the religious "city on a hill" with its economic equivalent of the "offshore startup," insisting that America's origins lie in the heroism of business entrepreneurs – those early modern investors, writers, and promoters like Smythe who were the equivalents of today's venture capitalists, start-up visionaries, and tech gurus because they

³¹ Weber's argument has since been extended and complicated by a number of scholars. See Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York: Norton, 1995); Burnham, *Folded Selves*; Mark Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); and Elisabeth Ceppi, *Invisible Masters: Gender, Race, and the Economy of Service in Early New England* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2018).

“organized, promoted, and supported hundreds of ventures, one after another, until multiple threads of failure began to stitch into a fabric of success.” In the course of doing so, these early modern businessmen developed “the quality that Americans have come to regard as quintessentially their own: perseverance.”³² While the details of the narrative may have changed, the plot repeats its predecessor’s blinkered refusal to acknowledge the costs of commercial and colonial violence, which played out among America’s puritan-dominated companies just as it did in the rest of the world.

One good example of this narrative practice appears in Butman and Targett’s early telling of the story of Robert Kett, who protested rising inequality and “wealth disparity” by leading a rebellion in Norfolk County, England, against the privatization of land through fencing enclosures in 1539. When John Dudley, then Earl of Warwick, successfully led the second attempt to quell the rebellion by publicly executing and dismembering its participants, Butman and Targett insist that “Dudley had little choice” since Kett refused to surrender.³³ In fact, the Kett episode appears in their account largely as a way to introduce Dudley, who is subsequently cast as the “mastermind” of the group of London men who plot England’s escape from economic disaster in the wake of the cloth trade crisis. It is Dudley who recruits Sebastian Cabot to lead a quest to reach Asia, in a venture organized through the mechanisms of a joint-stock company. Cabot insists – using language astonishingly close to what Winthrop would use a century later – that the company members must be “knit and accorded in unity, love, conformity, and obedience” in order to succeed.³⁴ While Butman and Targett’s emphasis on companies makes it clear that one cannot tell the story of early America without also telling the story of Russia, Ireland, Calais, Antwerp, the East Indies, and the gold coast of Africa, they continue to bury the fact that one also cannot tell the story of early America without telling the story of violence.

Thomas Hooker, the client of Warwick who helped found the colony of Connecticut, was among those English puritans who emigrated from Holland to New England. Before leaving England, however, Hooker delivered a sermon titled *The Danger of Desertion* (published later in 1641), which imagines God bringing destruction to the sin-wracked country he fled. Hooker’s focus here is specifically on England, but it drew on a tradition of Protestant millennialism whose vision was global,

³² Butman and Targett, *New World*, xxv. ³³ Butman and Targett, *New World*, 9.

³⁴ Quoted in Butman and Targett, *New World*, 45.

as Kristina Bross argues in her examination of Henry Jessey's 1650 *Of the Conversion of Five-Thousand Nine-Hundred East Indians*. She describes *Of the Conversion* as "a portmanteau of globalized Christian reporting" that envisions a "unified, worldwide evangelism movement stretching from the East to the West Indies," from New England in the Atlantic to Formosa (now Taiwan) in the Pacific. Bross makes clear, however, that this worldwide movement was also yoked to practices of violence that constitute "a thread running throughout ideas of expansion and of English empire building."³⁵ Jessey's volume appeared in a decade that saw renewed print attention to the earlier 1623 Amboyna massacre, which erupted in Indonesia out of tensions between the English and Dutch East India Companies over access to the spice trade. The massacre was characterized by brutal violence as the Dutch captured, tortured, and executed a number of English, Japanese, and Portuguese traders they deemed guilty of interfering with their trade, sparking outrage among English readers of the ensuing pamphlet war. Yet Jessey's own "celebration of worldwide Protestant brotherhood," Bross points out, "elides the violent wars and other incursions – the Pequot War, the Banda war, the enslaving of indigenous peoples in the East and West Indies – that made conversion efforts possible."³⁶

The massacre of the Pequot peoples at Mystic Fort in Connecticut took place in 1637, the year after Hooker arrived in Hartford and the same year Theophilus Eaton, who would become the first governor of nearby New Haven, arrived in New England. Wendy Warren has identified 1638, the year following the Pequot massacre, as the moment when "the first known slaving voyage to *and* from New England" took place; it was the year the first Africans arrived from the West Indies to New England as well as the year the first enslaved Native Americans were shipped to the West Indies. Warren goes on to observe that in this year, "only eight years after the founding of the famed Massachusetts Bay Colony, less than two decades after the celebrated Pilgrims founded the equally mythologized Plymouth Colony, an enslaved African woman on an island in Boston's harbor was anguished because another slave had raped her upon their mutual owners' orders, so that he might own a 'breed of Negroes.'"³⁷

Warren's sentence sets traditional narratives about the famed, celebrated, and mythologized features of early America against other stories

³⁵ Kristina Bross, *Future History: Global Fantasies in Seventeenth-Century American and British Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 11, 29.

³⁶ Bross, *Future History*, 22, 127. ³⁷ Warren, *New England Bound*, 7–8.

about the enslaved, the anguished, and the raped. Her book, which unearths the long-overlooked history of slavery in colonial New England, also unearths the often-brutal violence which that traditional narrative prevents us from seeing. By placing the Indonesian massacre at Amboyna in transoceanic dialogue with the Connecticut massacre in Mystic, Bross supplies a similarly critical counterpoint to the more celebratory account of seventeenth-century England's global cosmopolitanism provided by Games. Games argues that forceful imperial violence began to dominate England's global efforts only with Cromwell's Western Design, when a newly "centralized state capable of imposing its will on subjects well outside of its domestic borders – and thus well on its way to becoming an empire" – began to take shape.³⁸

While it may be the case that the centralized state arrived later, the coercion was always there. In fact, we can see joint-stock companies as a mechanism that delivered such coercion in global colonial contexts that were fraught with danger and risk. Joint-stock companies were alliances between private funds and state interests that outsourced military might by putting these ventures into the hands of private investors, a practice that kept them at a distance from while nonetheless serving the goals of the crown. To this extent, such companies operated as what I have elsewhere described as one of the "battering rams" of the phenomenon Sven Beckert calls "war capitalism."³⁹ In his history of cotton, Beckert argues that war capitalism began to develop in the sixteenth century as a way of extracting land and labor from distant locations around the globe, and it lasted in many parts of the globe until well into the nineteenth century. The term "war capitalism" better represents the period preceding nineteenth-century industrial capitalism than the traditional term "mercantile capitalism," he argues, because it communicates the "rawness and violence" of its practices and effects. For Beckert, only a global history of capitalism effectively illustrates the centrality of violence to the profitable collaboration between the state and private enterprise throughout this phase.⁴⁰

Reigning historical and geographical divisions, on the other hand, tend to obscure the long-standing partnering of violence with profit in the global context. Games, for instance, positions the violence of Cromwellian centralization as a dramatic shift from the private joint-stock ventures that

³⁸ Games, *Web of Empire*, 258.

³⁹ Michelle Burnham, *Transoceanic America: Risk, Writing, and Revolution in the Global Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 90.

⁴⁰ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2015), xv–xvi.

dominated the first half of the century. Yet she elsewhere observes that, well before Cromwell, Virginia “provided a crucial model of coercion and aggression that the English drew on in later ventures” both in the Atlantic and elsewhere around the globe.⁴¹ Adopting the framework of global war capitalism here would suggest that the joint-stock company partnered with settler colonialism by pairing existing mechanisms of joint-stock investment with an institutionalization of violent tactics in order to reduce the continued financial risks and losses associated with the former. Games furthermore notes that Cromwell’s efforts to recruit puritan investors and settlers later in the century “echoed the recruiting efforts of puritan companies and investors in the 1630s.” One of the consistencies, she observes, was that “[z]ealous puritan investors were quick to combine the welcome possibility of profit with the opportunity to ensure the violent destruction of a Catholic foe.”⁴²

This description also suggests that the transformation toward a more centralized proto-empire under Cromwell took place in the name of a global vision of Protestantism that had been in place for much longer. As early as 1577, for example, Sir Francis Drake carried into the Pacific both John Dee’s volume *General and Rare Memorials* and its vision of a “Protestant *cosmopolis* that would erase papal boundaries.” Hodgkins identifies this orientation with “a religion of Protestant imperialism” that is “derivative of but distinct from Protestant Christianity itself.”⁴³ Hodgkins furthermore makes clear the emerging racial terms of this vision, observing that “the Protestant imagination gradually and uneasily articulated the metaphysics of racial hierarchy, providing the apologia for binding some peoples over to landlessness and of binding others under in slavery.”⁴⁴ Elisabeth Ceppi has recently argued that such a “metaphysics of racial hierarchy” also developed within the language of New England puritan theology, where its persistent language of “service” and “mastery” came into contact (and ultimately into alignment) with Atlantic slavery.

Ceppi’s project offers a fundamental rethinking of the Weberian alliance between puritanism and capitalism by recognizing the critical role played by racial slavery. The virtues of industry and frugality associated by Weber with capitalist spirit were, Ceppi argues, actually “forged in the master-servant lived metaphors of vocation.” She demonstrates that the act of serving oneself – an act that was seen as hypocritical by puritans – was transformed into the virtuous practice of self-mastery precisely through the

⁴¹ Games, *Web of Empire*, 146.

⁴² Games, *Web of Empire*, 258, 256–257, 270, 259.

⁴³ Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire*, 27.

⁴⁴ Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire*, 137–138.

crucible of race, which distinguished white servants from black slaves. The spirit of capitalism is not just the spirit of self-mastery, then, but the spirit of white mastery over nonwhite others. Pairing Ceppi's literary analysis of New England discourse with Warren's social history of New England slavery gives us a completely different narrative about American puritanism, one that is embedded within a much larger, global context riven with racial inequality and exploitative violence.

These new frameworks raise questions that sit uneasily within existing narratives about English colonialism. Fitzmaurice concedes, for example, that English colonial projects grounded in a humanist language opposed to greed and corruption nonetheless routinely violated those precepts by practicing exploitation and dispossession, though he also insists that "this does not mean that humanist ideology was merely the wallpaper over colonization."⁴⁵ Hodgkins demonstrates that "English Protestantism served as a cohesive force binding together a reimagined Britain as it projected itself across the oceans," but also points to the difficulties of characterizing that "cohesive force." He insists, for example, that puritan radicalism challenged systems of hierarchy and monarchism even as a system of African slave labor stepped up by the 1640s. Struggling with the same dilemma posed by Fitzmaurice's inconsistent humanists, Hodgkins identifies a "strain of conscience" in early modern English writing that he distinguishes from humanist anti-imperialism because, he observes, "these guilty voices generally admit their investment in the colonial project, yet they still express a certain degree of remorse and foreboding – sometimes a very high degree." He calls this orientation "imperial trusteeship" and explains that its advocates imagined colonialism as "probational, conditioned on colonial beneficence and self-restraint" and believed that "God is to be feared as vigilant judge and avenger of abused properties and peoples."⁴⁶ What was the relation between commitments to the common good and civic virtue, on the one hand, and to acts of violence and self-interest in English overseas expansion, on the other? What is the legacy of puritan radicalism across the globe? Such questions begin to dissolve the putty that holds triumphalist narratives of early American history and culture together. Any new narratives must in turn grapple with the reality of commercial and colonial violence, with the conflicted and ambivalent responses to it, and with the role that an emergent racialized discourse played in it.

⁴⁵ Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America*, 193.

⁴⁶ Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire*, 131, 137, 144, 146.

Translation

In 1639, the puritan minister Patrick Copland wrote to John Winthrop to report on a “Japanese language catechism” he had acquired. Copland had been associated with the Virginia Company, both as rector for a proposed college that never materialized and as the writer of a promotional sermon, written in the same year that Robert Cushman in Plymouth delivered a sermon that drew on similar influences. Copland was interested in the conversion of the Indians,⁴⁷ and perhaps saw the Japanese text as an example for England’s Atlantic colonies, imagining translation as a means to a global Protestantism – as did Pococke in Syria, Boyle in London, Hyde in Malaysia, Eliot in Massachusetts, and Williams in Rhode Island.⁴⁸ One argument of this chapter is that we ought to be reading these otherwise far-flung writers together, despite the geographical distances and theological differences that separate them. Another argument I wish to make, however, is that the global project of English overseas expansion and the place of American puritanism within it cannot be understood without a richer and fuller engagement with translated texts. I therefore conclude with a brief turn toward translation as both a practice and a body of texts that deserve greater attention in our literary and cultural histories of this period.

Nan Goodman reminds us that there was a “glut of printed materials about the Ottomans that circulated in the seventeenth century” and that Cotton Mather’s library contained copies of some of those materials. She furthermore identifies an overlooked puritan “sense of kinship with and belonging to a larger, more inclusive world” that she locates in such texts as the 1698 puritan New England broadside “The Turkish Fast” – which reported on imperial Ottomans’ feelings of grief, and desire for atonement, after their defeat by Christian military forces. Goodman tracks this sense of global kinship through the puritans’ adherence to the law of nations, which developed out of the Roman tradition of civil law. That trajectory suggests further ways in which puritanism may have been aligned with the humanist tradition located by Fitzmaurice in other, nonpuritan, English colonial writing.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia*, 115; Fitzmaurice *Humanism and America*, 91; Games, *Web of Empire*, 233.

⁴⁸ *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, fifth series, vol. 1, 277–280; Copland to Winthrop, December 9, 1639; cited in Games, *Web of Empire*, 235.

⁴⁹ Nan Goodman, *Puritan Cosmopolis: The Law of Nations and the Early American Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 93, 1, 3, 10.

In addition to reading in Latin, Hebrew, Ancient Greek, Spanish, and German, Cotton Mather corresponded with a German missionary named Ziegenblagh, who was stationed in Tranquebar (now Tharamgambadi, on the Tamil Nandu coast of India). When Mather sent Ziegenblagh a copy of his 1721 volume *India Christiania*, he inserted into it a five-page bilingual text in English and Wampanoag – a missive that recalls Copland’s message to Winthrop, nearly a century earlier, about the Japanese-language catechism.⁵⁰ Through such evidence, Goodman offers us a cosmopolitan Cotton Mather, one whose “[p]ietism allowed for the kind of dialogue . . . that transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries.” This Cotton Mather – and the example of a puritan “internalized cosmopolitanism” he represents – corresponds neatly to the model of global English cosmopolitanism developed by Alison Games.⁵¹ It is crucial that we restore this global and translingual dimension to our understanding of New England puritanism. But it is equally crucial to recognize that this model of a celebratory puritan cosmopolitanism will not serve us especially well unless it also makes room for the profoundly racist Cotton Mather who emerges from Ceppi’s careful reading of his language of service and mastery.

When Bross describes this period as one in which “global sensibilities – the perceived connections of England and the world – were everywhere in play,” she significantly grounds that claim in the production of books that circulated to English readers news about Africa, the Levant, Russia, the East Indies, and the Americas.⁵² Collections like those by Richard Hakluyt brought together for such readers descriptions of the East with those of the West. But those collections were also rife with translations. We often categorize these works today as travel literature, but Fitzmaurice points out that they were really works of colonial promotion.⁵³ These widely circulating translations simultaneously fueled visions of global Protestantism, global trade, and global colonialism. The complex relationship of those visions to each other represents a starting point for new accounts of early America in global context. Our scholarly hesitancy to study texts in translation rather than in their original language is evidence of the accumulation of separate linguistic units that – much like their historical and geographical counterparts – have prevented us from pursuing global alternatives to our calcified narratives of early American history. Recovering this literary and cultural history of translation, however – in combination

⁵⁰ Goodman, *Puritan Cosmopolis*, 149–150.

⁵¹ Goodman, *Puritan Cosmopolis*, 5, 162.

⁵² Bross, *Future History*, 24.

⁵³ Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America*, 33.

with a focus on global joint-stock companies and a recognition of war capitalism's history of global violence – provides an initial set of tools that will allow scholars and students to fashion new narratives about America's colonial origins, its puritan and other writers and settlers, and their relationship to the rest of the world.

PART II

Approaches

CHAPTER 7

Theology

Lisa M. Gordis

Puritan literature and theology were closely intertwined. While the essays assembled here reveal the complexity of the term “puritan,” that term describes an orientation toward religious practice and church polity that was shaped by a distinctly literary theology, a theology firmly anchored in reading. Most important, puritan theology was defined in relation to the Bible, and conversely puritan theology shaped puritan reading and biblical exegesis. Moreover, the complexities of puritan theology and puritan scripturalism generated a rich and varied literature that emerged from interactions among puritan theology, the individual lives of puritan readers and writers, and the lives of transatlantic communities of puritans. Puritan writers – both ministers and lay people – addressed the complexities of their beliefs and their religious experience in various genres, including theology manuals, sermons, spiritual autobiographies and conversion narratives, and poetry. In those texts, puritan writers also considered what kinds of textual expression were most appropriate and most spiritually efficacious for their communities.

The Bible stood at the center of puritan literary culture, and adherence to a scriptural standard was central to many aspects of puritan faith and religious practice. Puritan allegiance to scripture was expressed not only through attempts to ground religious practice in scripture (and to reject practices not scripturally prescribed, such as vestments) but also in regular engagement with the biblical text. Puritans were encouraged to read the Bible regularly, both on their own and in the context of their ministers’ preaching. In *The Practise of Pietie*, a devotional manual “widely used in New England,” Lewis Bayly (c. 1575–1631) provided a schedule whereby a Christian could read the Bible through annually by reading three chapters each day and six on the last day of the year.¹ The Geneva Bible

¹ Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 158; Lewis Bayly,

offered prefatory instructions about “How to take profite in reading of the holy Scriptures,” advising Christians to do so “At the least twice euery day” and offering guidance about how to approach the text. Its guidance bridged the personal and the communal, suggesting that one should “Read interpreters, if he be able,” “Conferre with such as can open the Scriptures. Acts 8. vers. 30.31. &c,” and “Heare preaching and to proue by the Scriptures that which is taught, Acts 17, vers. 11.”² Similarly, John Cotton (1585–1652) exhorted his congregants in Old Boston to hold their ministers to a biblical standard, to “goe home” from church “and consider whether the things that have been taught were true or no: whether agreeable to the holy Scriptures or no.”³ Puritans considered the biblical text as they read it and heard it taught, and at the same time interpreted their own experiences in light of the biblical text and other literary models of religious experience. Some of the most compelling puritan texts emerge from puritans’ efforts to reconcile their own spiritual experiences with the theological and textual models of their religious system.

Puritan Theology

To understand puritan literature, we need to understand some of the complexities of puritan theology and the challenges it presented to those who believed in it. While puritans varied in their beliefs, they shared a set of core tenets that were essentially Calvinist. Some of these beliefs were codified as canons of Calvinist orthodoxy by the Synod of Dort in 1618–1619.⁴ Puritan theology was ordered through a system of covenants that operated and unfolded in divine time and across human time and experience. In the human timeline, the first covenant was the covenant of

The Practise of Pietie, Directing a Christian How to Walke That He May Please God, 3rd ed. (London, 1613), 314–315.

² *The Bible, That Is, The holy Scriptures contained in the Olde and Newe Testament, Translated According to the Ebrew and Greeke, and conferred with the best translations in diuers languages. With most profitable Annotations vpon all the hard places, and other things of great importance* (1599). Reprinted in facsimile as *The Geneva Bible* (Buena Park, CA: Geneva Publishing, 1991).

³ John Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine of Life: or, Sundry Choyce Sermons on part of the fift Chapter of the first Epistle of St. John* (1651; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1972), 200.

⁴ The synod of Dort was convened in response to the dissenting position of Arminianism, which the synod participants defined as a heresy. Drawing from the Canons of Dort, theologians and scholars sometimes refer to “Five Points of Calvinism”: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. (Students sometimes remember these points using the acronym TULIP.)

works.⁵ The covenant of works was an agreement between God and Adam, in which God promised eternal life in return for Adam's obedience. Because puritans emphasized biblical authority and therefore tried to ground their beliefs in the biblical text, the absence of an actual promise to Adam in the text presented a challenge to theologians. In Michael McGiffert's words, the "biblical base" of the covenant of works was "entirely inferential."⁶ Though the promise was "inferential," the prohibition against eating fruit from the forbidden tree was not, and in eating that fruit, Adam failed in obedience and abrogated the covenant of works. Puritans saw his disobedience as a Fall that not only broke the covenant but also damaged Adam and all people afterward, vitiating human reason and human will. As Calvin explains, "we are so vitiated and perverted in every part of our nature that by this great corruption we stand justly condemned and convicted before God, to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness and purity."⁷ Puritans referred to this damage as "total depravity" and understood its consequence to be that even if God were to offer humanity a second chance to fulfill the covenant of works, human beings would be unable to do so. Moreover, Adam's offense, having been committed against God, an infinite being, took on God's infinite quality, making it impossible for Adam himself to atone for his sin.

Fortunately, God, being omniscient, always already knew that Adam would fall, and addressed the problems his sin created by entering into the covenant of redemption. In this intratrinitarian covenant, God the Son agreed to atone for mankind's sin, God the Father agreed to accept the atonement, and the Holy Spirit agreed to apply the atonement to individuals. The mechanism for the atonement was the incarnation of God the Son, his willingness to be born and to die as a human being. As a human being, Christ would be an appropriate representative for humanity and could atone for Adam's sin. As a divine being, Christ could address the infinite quality of Adam's offense and make infinite atonement.

The covenant of redemption allowed God to make a new covenant with humankind, the covenant of grace.⁸ Under the covenant of grace,

⁵ Michael McGiffert argues that puritan ideas of the covenant of works developed in the 1590s, later than the idea of the covenant of grace. "Grace and Works: The Rise and Division of Covenant Divinity in Elizabethan Puritanism," *The Harvard Theological Review* 75.4 (1982): 464.

⁶ McGiffert, "Grace and Works," 466.

⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.1.8: 251.

⁸ Some theologians understood this to be a new covenant made with Adam, while others understood it to be made with Abraham.

mankind was promised salvation for faith, with God providing the faith human beings require. Puritans used the term “justification” to describe the application of Christ’s atonement to human beings, meaning that God agrees to accept Christ’s atonement as theirs and to impute Christ’s righteousness to them, rather than to hold them accountable for human sin. Justification resembles a legal acquittal, in that it does not indicate that the individual is actually innocent, but rather that God is treating the individual as not guilty.

In the Calvinist system, Christ’s atonement is limited, rather than universal. Only some people are saved, while others are damned. God predestined some individuals to salvation based on his own inscrutable will, and not based on those individuals’ merits. Divine grace is not only unmerited; it is also irresistible, something done by God for and to human beings, rather than by human beings. Once given, grace is permanent, and cannot be lost through human action, even through sin.

Human Experience and the *Ordo Salutis*

Because human beings are constrained by their perception of time, they experience salvation as an unfolding process, and puritan theologians devoted significant attention to describing that process and its stages, sometimes referred to as the *ordo salutis*, the order of salvation or morphology of conversion. While the elect were predestined for salvation by God in divine time, they come to understand their regenerate status over the course of their lives.

The first event in a puritan religious life was baptism. Though puritans did not regard baptism as an efficacious sacrament, they nevertheless baptized their children as a sign that these children were part of a community in a special covenanted relationship with God. As minister Thomas Shepard (1605–1649) explained in his *Autobiography*, baptism was a sign that “God had become thy God and is beforehand with thee.”⁹

Following baptism, many theologians described a period of preparation, in which God prepared a Christian for salvation. While human beings might strive to be ready for salvation, and thus might feel that they were preparing themselves, theologians emphasized that true preparation was divine rather than human activity. As Thomas Hooker (1586–1647), the

⁹ Thomas Shepard, *The Autobiography* (possibly composed 1646), in *God’s Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard’s Cambridge*, ed. Michael McGiffert (1972; revised and expanded edition, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 36.

first-generation minister who preached most extensively about preparation, explained: "All these are not wrought, so much by any power that is in us, as by the Almighty power of God working in us; for the sinner would not see his sinne, but the Lord forceth him."¹⁰ Hooker described two stages of preparation: contrition and humiliation. Contrition, he explained, was "when a sinner by the sight of sinne, and vilenesse of it, and the punishment due to the same, is made sensible of sinne, and is made to hate it, and hath his heart separated from the same."¹¹ Humiliation describes the soul's recognition of its utter dependence on God:

The Soule apprehends it selfe miserable, and it falls upon the arme of Gods mercy, and meerly goes out to God for succour. Now for a man to fetch all from without, and it to seeke for sufficiencie from himselfe, these two cannot stand together they are professely crosse one to another; and therefore after the Lord hath made the Soule see an absolute necessitie of a change, and now the Soule seeth an utter impossibilitie in himselfe, to change or alter himselfe, then he is content to go to Christ for grace and power. Thus Humiliation pares away all a mans priviledges, and all his hearing, and praying, &c. not, that a man must use these no more, but hee must not rest upon them for strength to help and succour himselfe withall.¹²

This passage addresses one of the tricky aspects of preparation: people were asked to pray, to recognize their sins, and to change their behavior, but at the same time to recognize that their own actions could not bring about their salvation. They "must not rest upon them for strength." Moreover, if they were among the elect and were able to see their sin clearly, to feel genuine contrition for it, and to experience humiliation, this was because God was working preparation in them. Nevertheless, this was a delicate point to maintain, leading Perry Miller to suggest that puritans were subtly but significantly softening their Calvinist orthodoxy.¹³

Puritan ministers recommended preparation but emphasized that human activity could not effect salvation, and moreover that their conception of the preparatory process could not constrain God's action.

¹⁰ [Thomas Hooker], *The Soule's Preparation for Christ. Or, A Treatise of Contrition, Wherein is discovered How God breakes the heart and woundes the Soule, in the conversion of a Sinner to Himselfe* (London, 1638). Reprint in facsimile as *The Soules Preparation*, Library of American Puritan Writings 15 (New York: AMS, 1982), 2.

¹¹ Hooker, *The Soule's Preparation*, 2.

¹² [Thomas Hooker], *The Soules Humiliation*, 3rd. ed. (London, 1640). Reprint in facsimile as *The Soules Humiliation*, Library of American Puritan Writings 16 (New York: AMS, 1981), 7.

¹³ Perry Miller, "Preparation for Salvation' in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4.3 (1943): 253–286.

As Cotton explained in his sermon series *Christ the Fountaine of Life*, “Princes are not wont to goe downe back lanes, but downe plaine wayes,” but as princes, they can go wherever they choose.¹⁴ The process of salvation might ordinarily proceed this way, but God can do what God chooses. Cotton also emphasized that “Christ will suddenly come into his Temple” only “when God hath brought us to this, that we are desirous of grace, rather in truth then in outward shew.”¹⁵

The point Cotton describes as Christ coming “into his Temple” is often identified as conversion. At this point, individuals become aware that they are among the elect and that the promises of salvation described in the Gospels apply to them personally. While justification occurs in the divine timeline, with the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the elect, human beings become aware of their justification at a point sometimes called vocation (literally, calling), when Christ offers the promises of the Gospel to the individual, together with the command to believe in them. God also grants faith, giving the individual the ability to believe in the promises. John Cotton describes the experience of faith: “when the soul hath the Lord Jesus, the highest and chiefest cause of rejoycing it hath, is, only its having of Christ.”¹⁶ Moreover, “The Spirit of God, wheresoever it is shed abroad in any member of Christ, it doth make us one with the Lord Jesus, it unites us into one fellowship of nature, a likenesse in affection and disposition, and a likenesse in all the graces of God.”¹⁷ Cotton describes both the experience of faith and its effects, and in many puritan texts the effects of faith receive fuller discussion than does the experience of faith itself.

One much-elaborated fruit of faith is sanctification. At conversion, the Holy Spirit renews the Christian’s heart, freeing it from corruption and increasing the Christian’s righteousness. As long as Christians remain in their earthly bodies, they cannot be fully freed from corruption or from sin. In sanctification, however, the Christian experiences moral renewal, and finds it increasingly easy to obey God’s will. Sanctified obedience differs from legal obedience, the obedience of the unconverted who hope to earn salvation through obedience to God’s will – an impossibility in the wake of the Fall. In contrast, sanctified obedience emerges from regeneration and involves the Christian’s attempt to be obedient to God’s will out of love and gratitude for grace and for God’s ordinances. Some theologians

¹⁴ Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine*, 42.

¹⁵ Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine*, 43.

¹⁶ Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine*, 10.

¹⁷ Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine*, 59.

described sanctified obedience as divine law “now written upon the human heart.”¹⁸ Shepard devoted his four-year sermon cycle *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* to sanctification, explaining its importance and differentiating it from legal obedience. He explained sanctification as a process, “for though grace and Christ’s Spirit make duties easy, his yoke easy, yet there is a contrary spirit that will make them hard and difficult at first.”¹⁹ While full obedience remains impossible, sins committed during the period of sanctification cannot reverse conversion or throw off grace – grace, as the Canons of Dort affirm, is irresistible, and moreover the perseverance of the saints means that saints, once made, do not become damned, even if they experience some backsliding in the process of sanctification.

The final stage in the *ordo salutis* is glorification, “the real change in man from misery, or the punishment of sin, to eternal happiness.”²⁰ Some theologians discussed stages of glorification occurring in this life, including saints’ experience of “the apprehension and sense of the love of God shining forth in Christ,” “undoubting hope and expectation of enjoyment of all those good things which God has prepared for his own,” and “the possession of spiritual gifts of grace in overflowing abundance.”²¹ But glorification in its fullest form takes place only in the world to come: “Perfect glorification is in the taking away of every imperfection from soul and body and the bestowal of total perfection. . . . This is granted to the soul immediately after the separation from the body, 2. Cor. 5:2; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 12:23. It is not ordinarily to be granted to the soul and body together until that last day when all the faithful shall in one moment be perfected in Christ, Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:20, 21.”²² In other words, glorification itself has multiple stages, some experienced as limited foretastes of glorification on earth, an interim stage experienced by the soul after death, and full glorification experienced by the soul and body together at the resurrection.

¹⁸ John Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 104.

¹⁹ Thomas Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins Unfolded* (1660), in *The Works of Thomas Shepard, First Pastor of the First Church, Cambridge, Mass. with a Memoir of His Life and Character*, vol. 2 (Boston: Boston Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853; reprint, Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1991), 96. Citations refer to the Soli Deo Gloria edition, but match pagination of the Boston Doctrinal Tract and Book Society edition.

²⁰ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology* (1623), trans. from the 3rd Latin edition of *Medulla Theologica* (1629) and ed. John D. Eusden (1968; Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1983), 171.

²¹ Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 172, 174. ²² Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 174.

Theology and Individual Experience

Puritan theologians, ministers, and lay people wrote extensively about the impact of this system on individual lives, exploring what the experience of faith would mean and who would have it. Puritan writers considered how Christians could tell whether or not they were among the elect, how the experience of salvation would unfold in a human life, and what a Christian's obligations were in a system in which God did all. In theory, the system focused on divine glory, rather than individual human beings. As Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) explained, the system turned on the relative insignificance of the individual: "The sweetest joys and delights I have experienced, have not been those that have arisen from a hope of my own good estate; but in a direct view of the glorious things of the gospel. When I enjoy this sweetness, it seems to carry me above the thoughts of my own safe estate. It seems at such times a loss that I cannot bear, to take off my eye from the glorious, pleasant object I behold without me, to turn my eye in upon myself, and my own good estate."²³ Individual salvation was a distraction from God's glory, which should be a Christian's primary concern.

In practice, though, individuals had to figure out how to live in this severe system. What should individuals who loved God and hoped for salvation do, in a system that emphasized that good works could not earn salvation? What could human beings know about their status? How could they tell if they were saved, and how could they be confident that they were experiencing faith rather than just wishing for it very intensely? And how could ministers guide their congregants without leading them to believe that their actions could be efficacious, which might lead them astray in the way that puritans referred to disparagingly as "going in a covenant of works"?

The relationship between the larger covenantal system and human beings' experience of it shaped many genres of writing, including sermons, spiritual autobiographies and conversion narratives, and poetry. Ministers and lay writers wrote about theology and about personal religious experience, and ministers used several different literary modes to help their congregants navigate this system, offering detailed explanations of theology

²³ Jonathan Edwards, *Personal Narrative* (1716), in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16: *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 800, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, accessed December 5, 2018.

generally and of the morphology of conversion, or the study of conversion and its manifestations.

The impulse to explain puritan theology in systematic fashion took the form of theological manuals, sermon cycles, and even poetry. Theological manuals such as William Perkins's *A Golden Chaine* (1591), William Ames's *Medulla theologica* (1623), and John Norton's *The Orthodox Evangelist* (1654) were widely read in New England, and William K. B. Stoevers identifies "the formal *loci communes*, treating the 'common places' or 'heads' of Reformed divinity, systematically arranged" as the "characteristic literary expression of Reformed orthodoxy."²⁴ In these texts, theologians explained the complexities of puritan theology, citing biblical and theological texts, and imposing order on the convoluted system using outlines and charts. Perkins included an elaborate fold-out chart captioned "A Survey or Table declaring the order of the causes of saluation and damnation, according to Gods worde. It may be in stead of an *ocular Catechisme* to them which can not read, for by the pointing of the finger, they may sensibly perceiue the chiefe points of religion, and the order of them" (see Figure 7.1).²⁵ Perkins's caption suggests that someone who can read this dense book might use the chart to explain theology to someone who cannot, and that "by the pointing of the finger" the nonliterate Christian would then be able to experience this theology in an almost bodily way, though given that purpose the chart seems strikingly textual. The chart depicts the unfolding of redemption, including stages that the regenerate might experience in their spiritual lives. The chart's right side depicts the experience of damnation as mirroring or mimicking the experience of salvation – what one might take to be "Effectual calling" might in fact be "A calling not effectuall." That "calling not effectuall" could be followed by other stages that could be mistaken for progress toward salvation, but nevertheless were part of what Perkins marked with a dark line as leading

²⁴ William K. B. Stoevers, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven: Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 16. The texts Stoevers lists are cited elsewhere in this essay, with the exception of John Norton's *The Orthodox Evangelist*. Or a Treatise Wherein Many Great Evangelical Truths (Not a Few Whereof Are Much Opposed and Eclipsed in This Perillous Hour of the Passion of the Gospel) Are Briefly Discussed, Cleared, and Confirmed: As a Further Help, for the Begetting, and Establishing of the Faith Which Is in Jesus. As Also the State of the Blessed, Where; of the Condition of Their Souls from the Instant of Their Dissolution: And of Their Persons after Their Resurrection (London, 1654).

²⁵ William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine, or The Description of Theologie, Containing the Order of the causes of Saluation and Damnation, according to Gods word. A viewe whereof is to be seene in the Table Annexed. Written in Latine, and translated by R.H. Hereunto is adioined the order which M. Theodore Beza used in comforting afflicted consciences. The second edition, much enlarged, with a Table at the end* ([London], 1597), foldout chart.

God created all things for himself, and the wicked man for the evil day. Prov. 16.4.
Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make of the same lump one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. Rom. 9.21.
If any be in Christ let him be a new creature. 2 Cor. 5. 17.



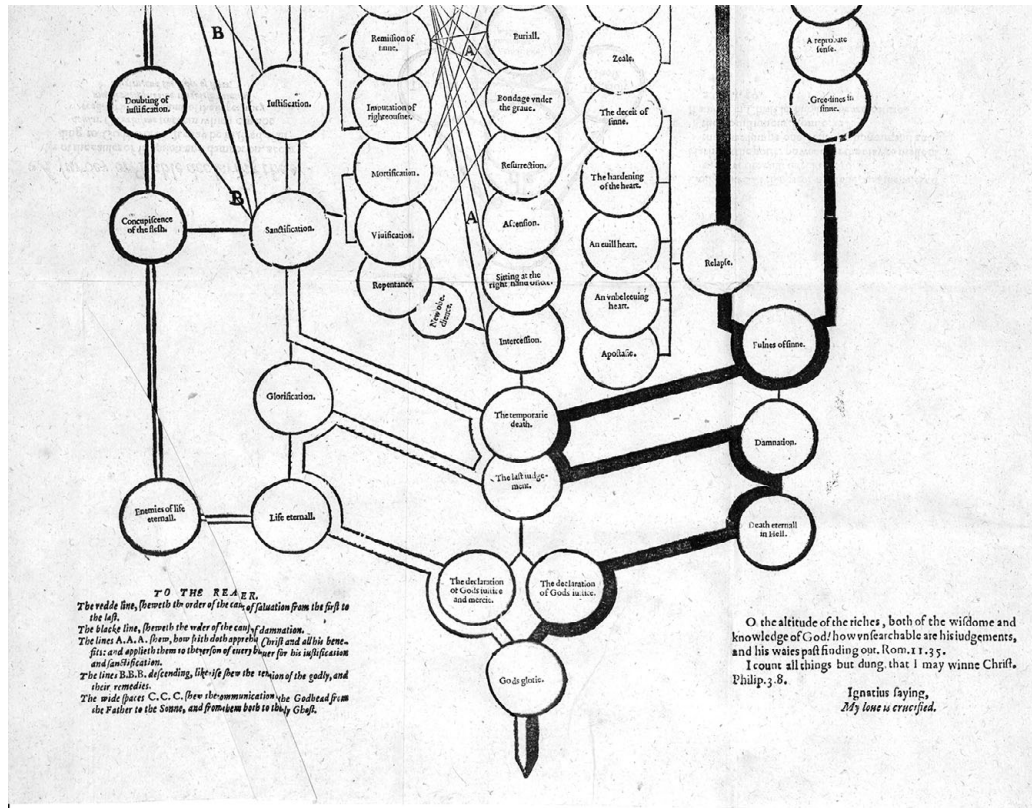


Figure 7.1 William Perkins, "A Survey or Table Declaring the Order of the Causes of Salvation and Damnation, According to Gods Worde," from Perkins, *A Golden Chaine* (1597).
 RB 600725, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

toward damnation rather than salvation. The chart's visual intricacy emphasizes that this is a complex and potentially anxious process, one with multiple branches and multiple opportunities to be horribly mistaken, even as it suggests that the ultimate resolution of all this complexity – the chart's bottom line – is simply "Gods glorie."

Sermons and Preaching Manuals

While theological handbooks were popular in New England, sermons reached wider audiences. Ministers were admired, and congregations were enthusiastic consumers of sermons that seem abstruse and dry to modern readers. Governor John Winthrop describes the patience of auditors at one sermon preached by the popular Thomas Hooker in 1639:

Mr. Hooker being to preach at Cambridge, the governour and many others went to hear him, (though the governour did very seldom go from his own congregation upon the Lord's day). He preached in the afternoon, and having gone on, with much strength of voice and intention of spirit, about a quarter of an hour, he was at a stand, and told the people, that God had deprived him both of his strength and matter, etc., and so went forth, and about half an hour after returned again, and went on to very good purpose about two hours.²⁶

The Cambridge congregation seems to have sat patiently, in hope that Hooker would return and continue his sermon, and then to have continued to sit patiently through two further hours of preaching. Winthrop found such enthusiasm not only notable but also worrisome, lamenting the dangers of excessive attendance at sermons just as twentieth-century leaders sometimes decried the dangers of rock music:

There were so many lectures now in the country, and many poor persons would usually resort to two or three in the week, to the great neglect of their affairs, and the damage of the public. The assemblies also were (in divers churches) held till night, and sometimes within the night, so as such as dwelt far off could not get home in due season, and many weak bodies could not endure so long, in the extremity of the heat or cold, without great trouble, and hazard of their health.²⁷

These eager crowds were drawn to sermons in which ministers explained the complexities of puritan salvation. Ministers often preached sermon

²⁶ John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*, ed. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 297.

²⁷ Winthrop, *Journal*, 316.

cycles, series of sermons about a particular passage or topic, over a period of months or even years. Their understanding of preaching was complex, growing out of their understanding of theology as well as their approach to Bible reading and biblical interpretation. Puritans believed that the Holy Spirit could convey grace through Bible reading, and understood the preached word as a more efficacious form of reading. Cotton distinguished between “a meere outward and bare reading of the letter” and “an opening of the sence, and such a kind of applying it to the hearts of the people” that is found in the preached sermon.²⁸ Quoting Romans 10:14–17, Cotton insisted that “*Faith comes by hearing*,” and many puritans believed that the preached word was the most common means by which God offered grace to his elect.²⁹

Sermons were generally structured around a biblical text and organized to suggest that they were unfolding the meaning of the text. Ministers generally divided their sermons into sections, described by William Perkins at the end of *The Arte of Prophecyng* as “THE ORDER AND SVMME of the sacred and only methode of *Preaching*.”³⁰ First, the minister would present his text by reading the verse or passage on which he was preaching “*distinctly out of the Canonickall Scriptures*.”³¹ In the section referred to as “Doctrine,” the minister would “*giue the sense and vnderstanding of it being read, by the Scripture it selfe*” and “*collect a few and profitable points of doctrine out of the naturall sense*.”³² The following two sections of the sermon opened out considerably, and offered ministers wide scope for their creativity. In the section called “Reasons,” the minister could explain the text by considering the verses in context, by collating related passages from other parts of the Bible, or by considering principles of nature, common sense, and human experience, in each case drawing on the rules of reason and logic. Finally, in the “Uses” or “Applications,” the minister would “*applie ... the doctrines rightly collected to the life and manners of men, in a simple and plaine speech*.”³³ In the Reasons and Uses, ministers ranged quite freely over the Bible, nature, and human experience, explaining the

²⁸ Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine*, 183.

²⁹ Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine*, 181; Lisa Gordis, *Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 15.

³⁰ William Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng, or, A Treatise Concerning the Sacred and Onely True Manner and Methode of Preaching First Written in Latine by Master William Perkins; and Now Faithfully Translated into English (for That It Containeth Many Worthie Things Fit for the Knowledge of Men of All Degrees)* by Thomas Tuke (London, 1607). Early English Books, 1475–1640/1823:09, 148.

³¹ Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 148.

³² Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 148.

³³ Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 148.

text's implications for their auditors' lives and adding lively imagery and even humor, while in theory they were simply unfolding the text's "plaine" meaning.³⁴

Plainness was a central feature of puritan preaching theory. Puritans emphasized not only that they were unfolding the "plain" meaning of the text but also that they were doing so in plain language. Puritan preaching was not by any means devoid of rhetorical devices, but such devices were used less flamboyantly than in the preaching of conforming contemporaries, effacing rather than calling attention to the ministers' artistry. Instead, puritans emphasized divine activity over human agency, often calling preaching "prophecyng" and arguing that prophecyng should include "no show of human wisdom or mixture of carnal affections" but instead should "manifest itself throughout as the demonstration of the Spirit."³⁵ Of course, even the title of Perkins's popular preaching manual, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, acknowledged that preaching is an art, and Perkins and authors of other preaching manuals described extensive fields of knowledge that ministers must deploy in crafting their sermons. But while Perkins advised "that the Minister may, yea and must priuately vse at his libertie the artes, philosophie, and varietie of reading, whilst he is in framing his sermon," he nevertheless insisted that "he ought in publike to conceale all these from the people, and not to make the least ostentation. *Artis etiam est celare artiam; it is also a point of Art to conceale Art.*"³⁶ The stakes in this concealment were high: "*Humane wisdom* must bee concealed, whether it be in the matter of the sermon, or in the setting forth of the words: because the preaching of the word is the *Testimonie of God, and the profession of the knowledge of Christ*, and not of humane skill: and againe, because the hearers ought not to ascribe their faith to the gifts of men, but to the power of Gods word."³⁷ Perkins's understanding of preaching linked "the hiding of humane wisdom, and the demonstration (or shewing) of the spirit" in a single sentence.³⁸

Treating preaching as prophesying, ministers also emphasized spontaneity and preached from notes, rather than writing out the full texts of their sermons. In his popular preaching manual, *The Faithfull Shepheard*:

³⁴ Teresa Toulouse describes the tension within Perkins's model of preaching that leads those applying it to draw "attention from the scriptural text and place it" on the section of the sermon dealing with uses. See *The Art of Prophecyng: New England Sermons and the Shaping of Belief* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 22. See also Gordis, *Opening Scripture*, 31–33.

³⁵ Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 194.

³⁶ Perkins, *Arte of Prophecyng*, 133.

³⁷ Perkins, *Arte of Prophecyng*, 132.

³⁸ Perkins, *Arte of Prophecyng*, 132.

or *The Shepheards Faithfulness*, Richard Bernard warned that being “tied vnto” one’s own language

hindreth deuotion, restraineth libertie of speech, it requireth much labour, and thereby makes the Ministerie irkesome to such: neither can such speake so often as is requisite, and as iust occasion requireth. It possesseth a man with feare, which confounds memorie, it curbes the good motions of the spirit, and preuents a man of the benefit of such things, as in speaking might offer themselues to his vnderstanding. Vpon present occasion, such an one, can neither speake more, nor otherwise, than hee hath committed to memorie before: a verie great hurt to a mans Ministerie: and hinderance to the course thereof in pronuntiation also, action, and affection. If a man feare to want words, let him be well prouided for matter and words *non inuita sequuntur*, as one well saith.³⁹

For these spiritual and practical reasons, ministers preached from notes rather than from a written text. The four-part sermon structure helped ministers to remember what they planned to say and helped auditors to follow the preaching. Print editions of sermons were generally prepared from the ministers’ notes or from notes taken by lay auditors, rather than from full texts prepared by ministers themselves.⁴⁰

While sermons in theory were mere “openings” of the text, in practice they were shaped by ministers’ varying theological and pastoral emphases, and they showed differences in style as well. Hooker, for example, preached extensively on the phases of preparation in multiple sermon cycles. In doing so, he clarified for his auditors that they should be striving to experience contrition and humiliation even as he emphasized that if they were doing so, it was not because of their own efforts, but because God was working these changes in them. John Cotton, too, often offered guidance for congregants trying to understand their own status in relation

³⁹ Richard Bernard, *The Faithfull Shepheard: Or The Shepheards Faithfulness: Wherein is for the matter largely, but for the maner, in few words, set forth the excellencie and necessitie of the Ministerie; a Ministers properties and dutie; his entrance into this function and charge; How to begin fitly to instruct his people; Catechising and Preaching; and a good plaine order and method therein: Not so as yet published. Very profitable both for young Students, who intend the studie of Theologie (herein being also declared what Arts and tongues first to be learned, what kind of Authours to be r[e]ad) and books necessarie in the beginning, and which in the first place) as also for such Ministers as yet have not attained to a distinct order to studie, write, meditate, and to preach methodically, both for their bettr course in deliuering the Word, and the peoples understanding in the hearing, and memorie in retaining the same.* By Richard Bernard, *Preacher of Gods Word* (London, 1607), 85. Early English Books, 1475–1640/622:12. Bernard’s quotation is from Horace. For fuller discussion, see Gordis, *Opening Scripture*, 13.

⁴⁰ For a brilliant analysis of note-taking practices, see Meredith Marie Neuman, *Jeremiah’s Scribes: Creating Sermon Literature in Puritan New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

to the *ordo salutis*. For example, some puritans expressed concern that they might mistake their desire for faith for faith itself. How could one be sure that one's experience of conversion was not merely wishful thinking? Cotton offered some reassurance for those wrestling with that question: "if we have such a singular esteem of him, we may be sure we could never have thus prized him, but that he first prized us."⁴¹ As in Hooker's explanation of preparation, Cotton emphasized that a genuine love of God could come only from God and from true faith.

Belief that true preparation or genuine love of God could come only from God did not resolve all doubts, as one might be mistaken about whether one's preparation was real and one's love of God genuine. Thomas Shepard's preaching often addressed the problems of doubt and hypocrisy. Shepard's understanding of hypocrisy included not only those who knowingly feigned faith but also Christians mistaken about their own spiritual status. The perseverance of the saints meant that true faith was permanent and would not be rescinded for sinful behavior, but the same was not true of a hypocrite's imagined faith. What if a puritan were to mistake the desire for faith for the thing itself? Cotton's reassurance would not avail if the puritan did not truly "prize" Christ but merely wanted salvation. So a Christian might interpret his sins as worrisome evidence that his faith was not real. Shepard's preaching often reminded auditors to be wary of assurance. Conversely, even as he exhorts them to "Consider he makes love to thee," he reminds them that sorrow and worry might be signs of divine love: "Hath not the Lord sent many sorrows, terrors, fears, cares, wearisome businesses, that thou hast wished an end of life? This is love. Hos. ii. 6. 5."⁴² The focuses of ministers' sermons reflected their personal theological and pastoral preoccupations.

Ministers' sermons varied stylistically as well, differing in the biblical texts ministers chose to "open," the other biblical texts they chose to incorporate into their reasons and uses, and the ways in which they incorporated biblical language into their own prose. Hooker, who often focused on the preparatory period, challenged his listeners' complacency. He incorporated biblical passages that put his auditors in dialogue with the biblical text, for example, inviting them to identify with David the biblical sinner and then "play . . . the part of *Nathan*," the prophet calling David to recognize his sins and repent.⁴³ Hooker applied biblical passages to the lives of his congregants, emphasizing parallels between the lives of biblical

⁴¹ Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine*, 8.

⁴² Shepard, *Parable*, 44, 45.

⁴³ Hooker, *Soule's Preparation*, 25.

figures and their own spiritual and physical lives. To stress the importance of particular application, he tells the story of Jonah sleeping on shipboard oblivious to the storm tossing the ship, until

at last the Master came and said, *Arise, O Sleeper, and call upon thy God*; And, as a father obserues, they came about him, and euery man had a blow at him, and then hee did awake: So because of generall reproofes of sinne, and termes a far off, men come to Church, and sit and sleepe, and are not touched nor troubled at all. But when particular application commeth home to the heart, and a Minister saith; This is thy drunkennesse, and thy adulterie and prophanenesse, and this will breake thy necke one day ... Then men begin to looke about them.⁴⁴

In this passage, Hooker invites his listener to identify with Jonah, who needed to be addressed personally before he understood the plight of the ship and his responsibility for it. At the same time, Hooker addresses the congregant nodding off in his pew during the long sermon, who might be shaken out of a slumber by the words "*Arise, O Sleeper,*" and who must recognize the need to awake from both physical and spiritual slumbers.⁴⁵

Shepard quoted extravagantly from the biblical text in his sermons, with passages sometimes resembling collages of biblical language. As I have argued elsewhere, Shepard understood biblical language to be the proper medium for describing divine activity in the human soul, and moreover saw biblical language as offering the possibility of intimacy with the divine.⁴⁶ That intimacy offered a partial solution to the problem of assurance. While the relationship between God and Christian could reach its consummation only in heaven, the biblical word offered the most profound connection with God that could be experienced on earth: "I can not come to God now; the most I can have of God now is in his word. If it be happiness in heaven to close with God in Christ, truly then it is a man's happiness to close with God in his word on earth."⁴⁷ Like Cotton, Shepard associated the most powerful hearing of the word with preaching. If preaching led only to "ineffectual hearing" of the word, the congregation might "hear the word spoken, but they do not hear God speaking. They heard Latimer speak, but not God speaking; they hear a sound, which

⁴⁴ Hooker, *Soule's Preparation*, 63–64.

⁴⁵ Hooker, *Soule's Preparation*, 63.

⁴⁶ Gordis, *Opening Scripture*, 71, 59.

⁴⁷ Thomas Shepard, *Of Ineffectual Hearing the Word* (1652), in *The Works of Thomas Shepard, First Pastor of the First Church, Cambridge, Mass. with a Memoir of His Life and Character*, vol. 3 (Boston: Boston Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853; reprint, Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), 382. Citations refer to the Soli Deo Gloria edition, but match pagination of the Boston Doctrinal Tract and Book Society edition.

every one says, and they think, is the word, but they hear not God speaking it.”⁴⁸ But in cases of effectual hearing, the word could offer real divine presence, in almost physical terms: “This blessed word and voice of God, every tittle of it cost the blood of Christ; written all the lines of it in the blood of Christ. O, make much of it, and it will make much of you; it will comfort you, and strengthen you, and revive you.”⁴⁹ Because biblical language was so powerful, Shepard wove it into his own sermons, hoping that his auditors would hear not Shepard but God’s word.

Shepard’s biblical appropriations are varied, and range from joyous to anxious. In some instances, he seems to be taking pleasure in biblical language itself. In *The Saint’s Jewel*, for example, Shepard exhorts his audience to take comfort, rhyming his exhortation with a quotation from Canticles that affirms that such comfort is possible: “Comfort thyself, Christ is thine. ‘I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.’”⁵⁰ Shepard then reassures his auditors that Christ’s merits are sufficient: “if, therefore, there be enough in Christ’s merits,” it is proper to “hold up thy head and take comfort to thyself.”⁵¹ Here, the rhyming quotation affirms Shepard’s promise of comfort.

More often, though, Shepard’s biblical quotations seem to address or even cover anxiety and hesitation, especially when Shepard describes the glories he hopes to see but has not yet seen. In *The Sound Believer*, for example, he exhorts:

Consider the glory of the place: the Jews did and do dream still of an earthly kingdom, at the coming of their Messiah; the Lord dasheth those dreams, and tells them “his kingdom is not of this world,” and that he “went away to prepare a place for them, that where he is, they might be,” (John xiv. 2, 3,) and “be with him to see his glory.” (John xvii. 23, 24.) The place shall be the third heaven, called our Father’s house, built by his own hand with most exquisite wisdom, fit for so great a God to appear in his glory (John xiv. 2, 3) to all his dear children; called also a “kingdom.” (Matt. xxv. 31,) “Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you,” which is the top of all the worldly excellency, called also “an inheritance,” (1 Pet. i. 3,) which the holy apostle infinitely blesseth God for.⁵²

⁴⁸ Shepard, *Of Ineffectual Hearing*, 367.

⁴⁹ Shepard, *Of Ineffectual Hearing*, 382–383.

⁵⁰ Thomas Shepard, *The Saint’s Jewel; Showing How to Apply the Promise* (1655), in *The Works of Thomas Shepard, First Pastor of the First Church, Cambridge, Mass. with a Memoir of His Life and Character*, vol. 1 (Boston: Boston Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853; reprint, Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1991), 289. Citations refer to the Soli Deo Gloria edition, but match pagination of the Boston Doctrinal Tract and Book Society edition.

⁵¹ Shepard, *The Saint’s Jewel*, 289.

⁵² Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer* (1645), in *The Works of Thomas Shepard, First Pastor of the First Church, Cambridge, Mass. with a Memoir of His Life and Character*, 1: 268. Citations refer to the later edition, but match pagination of the original edition.

Here, Shepard's collage of quotations from eight biblical passages reflects not only his attachment to the biblical word but also his awareness that any human language describing the heavenly kingdom is at best provisional. Shepard's biblical language here underlines the promise of eventual union with God, reinforcing the intimacy of the parental relation and the promised inheritance.

As the examples presented here suggest, each minister's sermons reflected his own approach to puritan theology and to puritan hermeneutics. In their own ways, each puritan minister's textual openings attempted to help congregants understand the implications of this system for their own lives.

Spiritual Autobiography and Conversion Narrative

Drawing on biblical models and on the instruction offered in their ministers' sermons, puritan writers produced spiritual autobiographies and conversion narratives in which they read and traced their own spiritual experiences in relation to the *ordo salutis* and other textual paradigms of spiritual life and conversion. These narratives intertwined literary and theological assumptions, as puritans believed that their experiences could and should be narrated and that they should be narrated in certain ways.⁵³ Shepard, for example, warned that "a man will sometimes covertly commend himself, and myself ever comes in, and tells you a long story of conversion, and a hundred to one if some lie or other slip not out with it. Why, the secret meaning is, I pray admire me."⁵⁴ While Shepard warned of the perils of improper narratives, Karl Morrison suggests that the literary form itself helps to define and constitute its writer's conversion, for conversion "is a name, not a thing ... the word is a metaphor."⁵⁵ For puritans struggling to assess their spiritual state, describing how what came before differed from what came after helped them to understand where they stood. Moreover, puritans saw conversion as having literary fruits as well as spiritual ones, with conversion enabling them as both readers and writers.⁵⁶

⁵³ Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 41.

⁵⁴ Shepard, *Parable*, 284.

⁵⁵ Karl F. Morrison, *Understanding Conversion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 2.

⁵⁶ Lisa Gordis, "The Conversion Narrative in Early America," in *A Companion to the Literatures of Colonial America: An Anthology*, ed. Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 371.

Puritans' spiritual autobiographies and conversion narratives often drew on familiar paradigms, including accounts of the conversions of Saul of Tarsus and Augustine, to explain the specific events of puritans' lives. In his *Autobiography*, Shepard described note-taking at sermons as a spiritual challenge, and then represented his improvement as an index of spiritual growth:

But I was studious because I was ambitious of learning and being a scholar, and hence when I could not take notes of the sermon I remember I was troubled at it and prayed the Lord earnestly that he would help me to note sermons. And I see cause of wondering at the Lord's providence therein, for as soon as ever I had prayed (after my best fashion) then for it, I presently the next Sabbath was able to take notes who the precedent Sabbath could do nothing at all that way."⁵⁷

For Shepard, analyzing aspects of his everyday experience through a spiritual lens endowed small triumphs with spiritual significance and helped him to understand his spiritual condition.

Conversion narrative is a special form of spiritual autobiography specifically focused on narrating the author's experience of conversion. In some puritan churches, for example, in Shepard's Cambridge, such narratives were related to the minister, the elders, or even the congregation as part of the process by which members joined the church, and in other communities believers came together "to share their personal narratives."⁵⁸ The 1638 confession of Jane Holmes, found in Shepard's notebook of his congregants' confessions, testifies to the early stirrings of her faith, her decision to migrate to New England, and her "entanglements" onboard ship with a "wretch" who "did not teach true doctrine" and who tried to seduce her both sexually and doctrinally.⁵⁹ But hearing the preaching of Thomas Weld on the text "return, you backsliding children," Holmes seeks counsel from Weld, and after "finding a rebellious heart, by many

⁵⁷ Shepard, *Autobiography*, 41.

⁵⁸ Francis J. Bremer, "To Tell What God Hath Done for Thy Soul": Puritan Spiritual Testimonies as Admission Tests and Means of Edification," *The New England Quarterly* 87.4 (2014): 625, 654. Bremer discusses varied uses of spiritual relations, suggesting that the practice of requiring conversion narratives for church membership was far from universal in New England. He also cites Baird Tipson in arguing that "The term 'conversion' incorrectly implies that the experience was 'a datable, once-for-all-time event' and so is best dispensed with" (Tipson, "The Elusiveness of 'Puritanism,'" *Religious Studies Review* 11 [1985]: 251, quoted in Bremer, "To Tell What God Hath Done," 640–641).

⁵⁹ Thomas Shepard, "Jane Holmes," in "The Confessions," in *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*, ed. Michael McGiffert (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 175–176.

trials I found Lord in me, and I found Lord. I loved him, and I found that my grief was that sin parted between me and God. And on sabbath day morning, 1 Mark – I will be thou clean, Lord, if wilt – and in prayer I found Lord persuaded my heart of his love. And was endeared to Lord and thought, if it might ever be thus, yet since fears, seeing greatness of the sin I am turned from.”⁶⁰ Even in Shepard’s spare notes, Holmes’s care to ascribe agency to God, rather than to herself, is evident: “Lord persuaded my heart,” and she “was endeared to Lord.” Moreover, her ongoing anxiety is emphasized in her closing sentence. Her narrative demonstrates how conversion narratives addressed personal and idiosyncratic experiences while interpreting those experiences in terms of broader paradigms, connecting private spiritual experience with public institutions of the church and its ministry.

The broader category of spiritual autobiography bridged those realms as well, describing authors’ spiritual experiences in texts often addressed to their children and also circulated to broader audiences. Shepard’s *Autobiography* was addressed “To my dear son Thomas Shepard with whom I leave these records of God’s great kindness to him, not knowing that I shall live to tell them myself with my own mouth, that so he may learn to know and love the great and most high God, the God of his father.”⁶¹ Yet the narrative exhorting Shepard’s son (and more broadly the children of New England) to love God also reveals spiritual struggle and ends with a poignant expression of incapacity rather than with spiritual triumph: “Thus God hath visited and scourged me for my sins and sought to wean me from this world, but I have ever found it a difficult thing to profit even but a little by the sorest and sharpest afflictions.”⁶² Sharing with Jane Holmes’s account an unresolved ending, Shepard’s *Autobiography* testifies to the challenge of understanding one’s own life in relation to puritan theology and the *ordo salutis*.

Similarly, Anne Bradstreet addresses a spiritual autobiography “To My Dear Children,” suggesting that they “may gain some spiritual advantage by my experience.”⁶³ Like Shepard, she asserts the spiritual value of affliction, yet she confesses to some disappointment in her spiritual experience:

I have often been perplexed that I have not found that constant joy in my pilgrimage and refreshing which I supposed most of the servants of God have, although he hath not left me altogether without the witness of His

⁶⁰ Shepard, “Jane Holmes,” 176–177. ⁶¹ Shepard, *Autobiography*, 35.

⁶² Shepard, *Autobiography*, 73.

⁶³ Anne Bradstreet, “To My Dear Children,” in *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1967), 240.

holy spirit, who hath oft given me His word and set to His seal that it shall be well with me. I have sometimes tasted of that hidden manna that the world knows not, and have set up my Ebenezer, and have resolved with myself that against such a promise, such tastes of sweetness, the gates of hell shall never prevail; yet have I many times sinkings and droopings, and not enjoyed that felicity that sometimes I have done. But when I have been in darkness and seen no light, yet have I desired to stay myself upon the Lord, and when I have been in sickness and pain, I have thought if the Lord would but lift up the light of His countenance upon me, although He ground me to powder, it would be but light to me; yea, oft have I thought were I in hell itself and could there find the love God toward me, it would be a heaven. And could I have been in heaven without the love of God, it would have been a hell to me, for in truth it is the absence and presence of God that makes heaven or hell.⁶⁴

Bradstreet does not dispute “the witness of His holy spirit” or doubt “that it shall be well” with her, yet describes perplexity that her “pilgrimage” has been less joyful than she supposed it would be. Here, too, we see Bradstreet trying to understand her own experience in the context of the system that she has been taught and in which she continues to believe. She presents her own writing as potentially helpful to her children, as they in turn try to understand their own experience.

Theological Poetry

Bradstreet addresses the tension between theology and experience in her poetry as well, incorporating the challenge of loving the world with weaned affections into her poetic plots. In “Contemplations,” Bradstreet’s speaker places her poetic aspirations in the context of theology, lamenting her own “imbecility” as she searches for poetic language appropriate to describe both nature’s beauty and God’s greatness.⁶⁵ Hearing the song of grasshoppers and crickets, she asks: “Shall creatures abject thus their voices raise / And in their kind resound their Maker’s praise, / Whilst I, as mute, can warble forth no higher lays?”⁶⁶ The answers she explores include both the damage done by Adam’s Fall and the consolation offered by the hope of salvation, when her own flawed writing will give way to the “name . . . graved in the white stone.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Bradstreet, “To My Dear Children,” 243.

⁶⁵ Anne Bradstreet, “Contemplations” (1678), in *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, I, 57.

⁶⁶ Bradstreet, “Contemplations,” ll. 62–64.

⁶⁷ Bradstreet, “Contemplations,” I, 232. For an excellent discussion of “Contemplations,” see Michael G. Ditmore, “Bliss Lost, Wisdom Gained: Contemplating Emblems and Enigmas in Anne Bradstreet’s ‘Contemplations,’” *Early American Literature* 42.1 (2007): 31–72.

In “Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666, Copied Out of a Loose Paper,” Bradstreet’s speaker wrestles with the challenge of loving the world with weaned affections – accepting that the world in itself contains things that are in themselves good and “pleasant” but ultimately impermanent and less important than spiritual matters and eternal life.⁶⁸ While the poem ends with the assertion “My hope and treasure lies above,” along the way Bradstreet’s speaker emphasizes the effort required to sustain that belief.⁶⁹ Only “when I could no longer look” does Bradstreet’s speaker “bles[s] His name that gave and took,” in language echoing Job’s acceptance of divine affliction.⁷⁰ Her assertion “Yea, so it was, and so ’twas just” suggests some strain, and her declaration “Far be it that I should repine” is complicated by the lamentation for the material and social spaces of her lost home that follows.⁷¹ This poem about loss is energized by its speaker’s attempt to understand her loss in the context of her beliefs. While theology is not the primary subject of the poem, the impact of belief on the individual is part of the poetic plot.

Michael Wigglesworth’s poem *The Day of Doom* focuses more explicitly on the perplexities and challenges of predestinarian theology and its implications for the Halfway Controversy. Wigglesworth (1631–1705) represents his poem as a second-choice substitute for preaching, presented because illness “with-held” him from serving Christ.⁷² In the body of his poem, Wigglesworth describes the Judgment Day, as various groups of the damned protest the injustice of their damnation before they are ultimately cast into hell. Wigglesworth’s reprobates describe some of the stages on the

⁶⁸ Anne Bradstreet, “Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666, Copied Out of a Loose Paper” (1867), in *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, 1. 31.

⁶⁹ Bradstreet, “Verses upon the Burning of Our House,” 1. 58.

⁷⁰ Bradstreet, “Verses upon the Burning of Our House,” ll. 17–18. Her language echoes Job 1:21, when Job, hearing of the deaths of his sons and the destruction of his property, responds, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

⁷¹ Bradstreet, “Verses upon the Burning of Our House,” ll. 20, 22.

⁷² Michael Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom: or, A Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgment. With a Short Discourse about Eternity*. By Michael Wigglesworth, Teacher of the Church at Maldon, in N.E. (1662; Boston, 1701). The quotation is taken from the second stanza of Wigglesworth’s prefatory poetic address, “To the Christian Reader,” which appears immediately after the title page in this edition (l. 15). The text of *The Day of Doom* is available online at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=evans;idno=N00854.0001.001> through the Evans Early American Imprint Collection. However, this version does not fully preserve the formatting of the printed text, especially indented lines of poetry. Page images are available through Readex Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639–1800 at <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=ARDX&docref=image/v2%3AoFzB1FCB879B099B%40EAIX-of30156D93D8F690%40-oFAEEEB2A447C3F8%4000>.

dark line of the Perkins chart (Figure 7.1), including those who mistakenly believe that they are saved and are doing their best to obey God.

The toughest case in Wigglesworth's poem is the damned babies, those "who dy'd in Infancy, / And never had or good or bad / eff[e]cted pers'nally."⁷³ They protest:

If for our own transgression,
or disobedience,
We here did stand at thy left-hand,
just were the Recompence:
But *Adam's* guilt our souls hath spilt,
his fault is charg'd on us;
And that alone hath overthrown,
and utterly undone us.

Not we, but he, ate of the Tree,
whose fruit was interdicted:
Yet on us all of his sad Fall
the punishment's inflicted.
How could we sin that had not bin?
or how is his sin our
Without consent, which to prevent
we never had a pow'r?⁷⁴

Insisting that they did not live long enough to sin and that they never consented to Adam's sinful actions, the damned babies complain that it is even more unfair that Adam himself is saved:

Behold, we see *Adam* set free,
and sav'd from his trespass,
Whose sinful Fall hath split us all,
and brought us to this pass
Canst thou deny us once to try,
or Grace to us to tender,
When he finds grace before thy face,
that was the chief off[e]nder?⁷⁵

While eventually this challenge will lead some New Englanders to leave Calvinism behind, Wigglesworth rejects it, and insists that the babies' assumptions are wrong; because Adam "was design'd of all Mankind / to be a publick Head," Adam's sin is their sin, and not his alone:

⁷³ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, stanza 166.

⁷⁴ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, stanzas 167, 168.

⁷⁵ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, stanza 170.

But what you call old *Adam's* Fall,
 and only his Trespass,
 You call amiss to call it his,
 both his and yours it was.⁷⁶

Moreover, the judge taunts that they would not be complaining had they received salvation because of Adam's obedience:

Would you have griev'd to have receiv'd
 through *Adam* so much good,
 As had been your for evermore,
 if he at first had stood?
 Would you have said, we ne'r obey'd
 nor did thy Laws regard;
 It ill befitts with b[e]n[e]fits
 us, Lord, so to reward.⁷⁷

More important, he argues the centrality of God's liberty to the system. God must be able to grant or deny grace to the protesting babies, even as he grants it to Adam, "Else should my Grace cease to be Grace; / for it should not be free."⁷⁸

Yet even Wigglesworth concedes that this is a hard position, and has God "allow" the babies "the easiest room in Hell."⁷⁹ There is some debate about whether this is a genuine or sarcastic concession, but as the poem winds down, it represents the saved having fully weaned their affections from the damned, and not grieving as they watch the damned being hurled into the fiery lake:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| The tender Mother will own no other of all her numerous brood, But such as stand at Christ's right hand acquitted through his Blood. | |
| The pious Father had now much rather his graceless Son should ly | Luke 16:25. |
| In Hell with Devils, for all his evils burning eternally. | |
| Than God most high should injury, by sparing him sustain; | Ps. 58:10 |
| And doth rejoyce to hear Christ's voice adjudging him to pain. ⁸⁰ | |

⁷⁶ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, stanzas 172, 171.

⁷⁷ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, stanza 174.

⁷⁸ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, stanza 177.

⁷⁹ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, stanza 181.

⁸⁰ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, stanzas 199, 200.

Wigglesworth dramatizes weaned affections at their most extreme, showing the regenerate loving Christ more than wives, siblings, and children. God's glory trumps all human relationships, for God's glory stands at the center of the system. Wigglesworth's poem serves as both entertainment and theological education, offering clarification of some of the challenging aspects of puritan theology.

Edward Taylor (c. 1642–1729), another minister-poet, also composed a poem series about the perplexities of salvation and church membership, as well as writing poetry to prepare for preaching.⁸¹ In "The Ebb and Flow," he brings together the pastoral and the private, describing the spiritual experience of a minister:

When first thou on me Lord wrought'st thy Sweet Print,
 My heart was made thy tinder box.
 My 'ffections were thy tinder in't.
 Where fell thy Sparkes by drops.
 Those holy Sparks of Heavenly Fire that came
 Did ever catch and often out would flame.

But now my Heart is made thy Censar trim,
 Full of thy golden Altars fire,
 To offer up Sweet Incense in
 Unto thyselfe intire:
 I finde my tinder scarce thy sparks can feel
 That drop out from thy Holy flint and Steel.

Hence doubts out bud for feare thy fire in mee
 'S a mocking Ignis Fatuus
 Or lest thine Altars fire out bee,
 Its hid in ashes thus.
 Yet when the bellows of thy Spirit blow
 Away mine ashes, then thy fire doth glow.⁸²

In this short poem, Taylor's speaker uses images of fire to describe the experience of faith after conversion and addresses the problem of assurance specific to the minister. In the first stanza, the heart of the new convert is represented as God's "tinder box," ready to burst into flame easily at the

⁸¹ See Edward Taylor, *Gods Determinations touching his Elect: and The Elects Combat in their Conversion, and Coming up to God in Christ together with the Comfortable Effects thereof*, in *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, ed. Donald E. Stanford (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 261–335. Taylor's editor, Donald Stanford, asserts that "*The Day of Doom* ... was most certainly in Taylor's mind as he composed his own poem on the destiny of man," in part because "[h]is wife used to recite Wigglesworth's verse to him" (xxxvi).

⁸² Edward Taylor, "The Ebb and Flow," in *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, ed. Donald E. Stanford (1960; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 346.

smallest “Sparkes” of divine fire.⁸³ In the second stanza, the speaker’s heart is represented as a “Censar,” expressing the speaker’s sense that as a minister, he has become a church vessel, bearing God’s “golden Altars fire” for others.⁸⁴ As he does so, he finds his own experience of faith changed, even diminished: “I finde my tinder scarce thy sparks can feel.”⁸⁵ This leads to “doubts” in the third stanza, where the speaker worries that what he has taken to be God’s “fire in [him]” is actually “a mocking Ignis Fatuus,” Latin for “foolish fire,” and used to describe a phosphorescent light sometimes visible over marshes, due to combustion of gas emitted by decaying organic matter.⁸⁶ While the term is used more broadly to describe a delusive hope, Taylor uses the literal meaning in relation to his other fire imagery to describe anxiety about hypocrisy: What if the speaker’s tinder-box stage was never real faith, but only a false fire, or what if it has gone “out”?⁸⁷ Like Wigglesworth, Taylor draws the dark line of Perkins’s chart into his poem. But the fourth fire image of the poem resolves the problem, comparing the mature convert’s heart to ashy gray coals. Such coals, the speaker reminds us, can have real and constant heat, and “when the bellows of [God’s] Spirit blow / Away mine ashes, then thy fire doth glow.”⁸⁸ Just as the ashy coals of a barbecue glow red when fanned, Taylor’s heart glows with divine fire when God’s spirit touches him. Humorously representing the Holy Spirit as a bellows and playing on the Hebrew רוּחַ (*ruach*) for spirit, Taylor’s speaker affirms his assurance, for this is after all “thy fire” and not his own, the genuine flame of God’s presence.⁸⁹ Taylor builds a poem around spiritual experience, treating poetry not as a second-rate substitute for a sermon but as a genre with the potential to be shaped by theology and to draw drama and creative power from Christian experience.

Puritan texts were shaped by theology, both because theories of reading and writing were central to puritan faith and because puritan faith was central to the lives and experiences of many puritan writers. As ministers, political leaders, and lay people wrestled with the challenges of their faith and its consequences for individuals and communities, they created a varied body of illuminating and moving texts that reveal the rich complexity of puritan belief and puritan literary practice.

⁸³ Taylor, “The Ebb and Flow,” ll. 1–6.

⁸⁴ Taylor, “The Ebb and Flow,” ll. 7–8.

⁸⁵ Taylor, “The Ebb and Flow,” l. 11.

⁸⁶ Taylor, “The Ebb and Flow,” ll. 13–14; “ignis fatuus, n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, July 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/91208, accessed November 21, 2018.

⁸⁷ Taylor, “The Ebb and Flow,” l. 15.

⁸⁸ Taylor, “The Ebb and Flow,” ll. 17–18.

⁸⁹ Taylor, “The Ebb and Flow,” l. 18.

CHAPTER 8

Aesthetics

Joanne van der Woude

Beauty and its attendant feelings – traditionally considered the basis of aesthetics – are not commonly associated with puritan (literary) culture. For instance, the poetry in the first book printed in puritan Massachusetts, the Bay Psalm Book, has been professionally assessed as “utter rhythmic and syntactic wreckage.”¹ Meanwhile, Hawthorne’s gripping, fictional depictions of legal proceedings in *The Scarlet Letter* have made many people believe the puritans were cold, cruel, judgmental men in black.² Only in the last decade have scholars rediscovered the importance of feeling in puritanism: importance that primarily inheres in the fact that being emotionally moved was a legible sign of personal salvation.³ Most puritans, whether lay churchgoers, female poets, or learned theologians, were on a constant quest to discover whether their largely inscrutable God had predestined them to heaven or hell. Having strong feelings, usually (paradoxically) of abandonment or despair, became an important sign that God, by causing emotional pain, was working to convert a sinner through the power of affliction. After despondency, many believers reported a sense of relief, delight, or pleasure, and the combination – or even just the initial dejection – was widely interpreted as a good sign of salvation. Such signs underlay the entire system of puritan theology, structuring everyday life in ways that shaped puritan aesthetics. Feeling also underpins puritan literary culture because texts both shaped and registered how believers interpreted their sorrows. Language and literature made the invisible state

¹ Harrison T. Meserole, *American Poetry of the Seventeenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 353.

² Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter and Other Writings*, ed. Leland S. Person (1850; New York: Norton, 2005).

³ Abram Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans: Calvinist Fellow Feeling in Early New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute, 2011); and Heather Miyano Kopelson, *Faithful Bodies: Performing Religion and Race in the Puritan Atlantic* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

of one's soul knowable in a process often mediated by how believers spoke about their hearts.

The lifelong process of conversion – the increasing assurance of salvation and growth in sanctification for a single believer – thus depended on experiencing feelings of a particular nature and, as older scholarship has delineated, usually in a fixed order.⁴ The central events of any puritan individual's religious life were not only mediated by feelings, but actually consisted of feelings. Emotions were not a by-product of salvation; they were both the road and the destination of the puritan soul. But they were not primarily experienced alone: as churchgoers were moved by sermons, poets by nature or family life, and theologians by Scripture, their outward expressions of being moved could move others in turn. Feelings and their expressions – tears, sobs, but also joy – thus became extremely meaningful and influential. Salvation was configured through texts and community; through the use of certain, fixed tropes, puritan believers confessed they were moved by the right things in the right way to the right extent and toward the right end.

All these feelings therefore shape conversion, society, and (literary) aesthetics. If aesthetics is considered to mean taste, judgment, and beauty, the puritans are thought to have a vexed relationship with it.⁵ Some scholars have felt the puritans' fervent Protestantism stripped their language and buildings of any ornament, resulting in a so-called anti-aesthetic plain style – even if it is difficult to recognize this plainness in puritan poetry, gravestone carving, diaries, or print (as I have argued elsewhere).⁶ However, puritan aesthetics reasserts itself as a particularly fruitful subject of inquiry when concerns of form and style are integrated into the new scholarly focus on feeling. The philosophical work of Jacques Rancière

⁴ Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965); Charles L. Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Daniel B. Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America* (1968; Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); and Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

⁵ For the established definitions, see Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (1790; New York: Hafner, 1951), 45–46, 48, and Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Mankind, in a Series of Letters*, trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (1795; Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 23rd Letter, 161.

⁶ Joanne van der Woude, "Puritan Scrabble: Games of Grief in Early New England," *Common-place: The Interactive Journal of Early American Life* 11.4 (2011), www.common-place-archives.org/vol-11/no-04/van-der-woude/, accessed December 15, 2018. A classic description of the plain style is offered by Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Ezra Tawil provides an important rethinking in "Seduction, Sentiment, and the Transatlantic Plain Style," *Early American Literature* 51.2 (2016): 255–297.

helps to do just that. Rancière defines aesthetics “as the systems of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience.”⁷ This theory of aesthetics as a system of both articulation and acknowledgment means that aesthetics govern not only what gets expressed (and how) but also what gets heard, accepted, and recorded. In this sense, aesthetics shapes literature, because aesthetics consists of what people find moving, memorable, and worth writing down. This behavior helps explain Rancière’s formulation of aesthetics as a “distribution of the sensible.” “The sensible” – that which is felt – is distributed over the congregation: the Puritans collectively feel with and for each other. According to Rancière, this aesthetic system “simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it.”⁸ It is, in other words, the structures that govern what can be said, what can be seen, and what can be heard or recognized (including what goes unsaid, unseen, unheard, or unrecognized). This distribution matters because it functions as a tool of inclusion or exclusion. The distribution of the sensible, as Rancière says, “reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community.”⁹

We can see that formulation best in conversion narratives. Puritan believers could become full church members based on these narratives, which rendered their feelings visible and acceptable – but only according to certain aesthetic *a priori* forms of recognition. In this way, aesthetic recognition led to political incorporation, as only full male church members were allowed to vote on certain matters.¹⁰ An investigation of aesthetics then turns out to be, in Michael Bérubé’s words, “not only about what various cultural practices do, but also about how they strike the senses – and whose senses, and which senses, and why” and what that

⁷ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 8. As he goes on to explain, “Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time” (8).

⁸ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 7.

⁹ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 7.

¹⁰ This role has been misunderstood, based on the overgeneralization that only accepted male church members were allowed to vote. Instead, the puritan principle of godly rule gave elect laymen the power to choose their own ministers and discipline their fellow congregants. It did not, however, entail (what we would call) secular political enfranchisement, which means that freemen who chose not to go to church, or freemen who did, but never converted, had the same power to choose their worldly leaders as the (male) confessors. See David D. Hall, *A Reforming People: Puritanism and the Transformation of Public Life in New England* (New York: Knopf, 2011), chs. 2 and 3.

striking accomplishments.¹¹ Rancière's idea of aesthetics, which relies on sense perception and emphasizes feeling, does away with any requirements for literature or art to be purposefully decorative or beautiful: after all, one may as well be moved by a simple poem as by a fanciful one.

The puritans would not have called their affective strategies aesthetic: the term "aesthetics" did not exist as such until 1735, and it would not gain currency until the advent of eighteenth-century American literature.¹² Nevertheless, this chapter investigates puritan aesthetics – in a Rancièrian sense – for what it tells us about colonial religion and literature, including the potential costs of the aesthetic model offered by the puritans' particular distribution of the sensible. What happened to those who did not feel the right way? The ramifications of this were obviously the largest in the realm of public conversion: settlers who did not confess their salvific feelings before the meetinghouse could not partake of the Lord's Supper. But some Native New Englanders (usually Wampanoag) also confessed: most of them had studied with puritan missionary John Eliot and his Native assistants, and their stories were judged by a committee of puritan preachers.¹³ If the confessions were deemed valid, their speakers were allowed to be full members in the Native puritan churches and live in the relative safety of puritan Praying Towns.¹⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the sufferings related by Wampanoag confessors – devastating epidemics, displacement, cultural annihilation – far surpass those of puritan

¹¹ Michael Bérubé, *The Aesthetics of Cultural Studies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 12.

¹² For a general history of aesthetics, see Peter Kivy, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004). For aesthetics in early America, see Edward Cahill, *Liberty of the Imagination: Aesthetic Theory, Literary Form, and Politics in the Early United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), and Joseph Rezek, *London and the Making of Provincial Literature: Aesthetics and the Transatlantic Book Trade, 1800–1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

¹³ For recent descriptions and analyses of the procedure, see Craig White, "The Praying Indians' Speeches as Texts of Massachusetts Oral Culture," *Early American Literature* 38.3 (2003): 437–466; Kathryn N. Gray, "How may wee come to serve God?: Spaces of Religious Utterance in John Eliot's Indian Tracts," *Seventeenth Century* 24.1 (2009): 74–96; Julius H. Rubin, *Tears of Repentance: Christian Indian Identity and Community in Colonial Southern New England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), ch. 1; Jacqueline M. Henkel, "Represented Authenticity: Native Voices in Seventeenth-Century Conversion Narratives," *New England Quarterly* 87.1 (2014): 5–45.

¹⁴ Although earlier scholars suggested the location of Praying Towns may have allowed communities to maintain proximity to ancestral lands (longer), scholars now agree that converts were widely displaced, distrusted, and victimized. See Jean M. O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650–1790* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 52–56; David J. Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity, and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600–1871* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Christine M. Delucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip's War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

churchgoers. This chapter ends with an exploration of how the Native speakers use puritan aesthetics for their own ends, trying to make visible what most puritans could not (or would not) see.¹⁵

The Puritan Paradox

Modern readers may be surprised to find that the pain that so often attends puritan conversion is not all mental or spiritual but frequently physical as well. This aspect of puritan aesthetics becomes apparent in meditations, life writing, and poetry (in addition to English and Wampanoag conversion narratives).¹⁶ Fevers, fires, even chronic illness are all divinely dispensed so as to convert sufferers. Anne Bradstreet asks rhetorically: "And if He knows that weakness and a frail body is the best to make me a vessel fit for His use why should I not bear it?"¹⁷ Suffering is beneficial and should therefore be born or even solicited. This trope leads to a literature heavy with self-incrimination in which one might not even hope for recovery: "The Lord knows that I dare not desire that health that sometimes I have had, lest my heart should be drawn from Him, and set upon the world."¹⁸ Here as elsewhere, Bradstreet introduces the vehicle of her heart, which seems synonymous with her soul, her volition, or her most inner self.

In her poem "Upon the Burning of Our House," Bradstreet turns to this same sense of self (or, rather, heart)-incrimination:

Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide,
And did thy wealth on earth abide?
Didst fix thy hope on mold'ring dust?
The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?¹⁹

The rapid succession here of "dust" and "flesh" registers the intimations of mortality offered by the sight of the smoldering ashes, which she likens to heaps of excrement: "Raise up thy thoughts above the sky / That dunghill mists away may fly" (ll. 45–46). Bradstreet repeatedly registers how much she would like things of this world – good health, a home – and how mistaken she is in such worldly desires. A vengeful, tormenting God often inflicts great suffering on believers and their hearts, taking away these

¹⁵ In Rancière's terms, their narratives attempted to redistribute the sensible, perceptually altering the visible and invisible and politically rearranging the paradigms of inclusion and exclusion.

¹⁶ It also features prominently in sermons, as discussed by Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 39–49.

¹⁷ Meditation from August 28, 1656, in *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeanine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1967), 254.

¹⁸ Meditation from August 28, 1656. ¹⁹ Meditation from August 28, 1656, 293, ll. 41–44.

worldly goods too much desired; and because such suffering is redemptive, puritan writers come to long for it in ways that bear distinctly masochist overtones. But there is a paradox built into such aesthetics, for the vision of the good that lies beyond this present world often depends on the memory of these worldly goods. Anne Bradstreet must be moved to love God more than her lost home through the very loss of that home; yet the vision of acquiring union with God comes in the form of a new home: "a house on high erect / Framed by that mighty Architect, / With glory richly furnished."²⁰

Puritan aesthetics revels in this paradox: a powerful, masochistic denigration of the self that results, ultimately, in the self's final exaltation, often expressed in the same worldly terms used for its denigration. Whereas John Donne, back in England, had already requested that God "ravish [rape] me" in order to be fully possessed and owned by Him, New World preacher Edward Taylor takes Donne's erotic and masochist imagery a few steps further.²¹ Taylor imagines all sorts of possible penetrations in an elaborate conceit of sublimation:

Lord let thy Doctrine melt my Soule anew:
And let the Scepter drill my heart in mee:
And let thy Spirits Cotters pierce it through
Like golden rivits, Clencht, mee hold to thee.²²

Here, the believer and God are held together like carpentry, with God supplying all the tools and the speaker serving as the malleable material on which they are exercised. Penetrations multiply: cotters are usually inserted through slots (which in this case must go through the speaker's heart), while rivets go through a little shaft in the cotter to spread and bend, keeping the inserted rod in place. God's symbol of majesty and rule (the Scepter) thus becomes a method for assembling the devout: "drilling my heart in mee." Ivy Schweitzer writes: "The clenching or gripping of nails into the wood of the cross, and of rivets into the substance of the soul, suggests also hands and teeth clenched in pain. Human consent to God's will is not easily or painlessly won" – an observation echoed by the confessors rehearsing their afflictions in the meetinghouse.²³

²⁰ Meditation from August 28, 1656, 293, ll. 47–49.

²¹ John Donne, "Holy Sonnet XIV," l. 14, in *The Complete English Poems*, ed. C. A. Patrides (1985; New York: Everyman's Library by Knopf, 1991), 443.

²² Edward Taylor, *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, ed. Donald E. Stanford (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 176, ll. 43–46.

²³ Ivy Schweitzer, *The Work of Self-Representation: Lyric Poetry in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 104.

The imagery for this relationship with God could take on a multitude of terms – melting, drilling, piercing, or striking. Earlier in the same poem, for example, Taylor writes:

Oh! that this, Thine Authority was made
 A Golden Anvill: and my Contemplation
 A smiting Hammer: and my heart was laid
 Thereon, and hammerd up for emendation.
 And anvilld stoutly to a better frame
 To entertain thy rayes that round the same.
 (ll. 13–18)

In this moment, the relationships are reversed: Taylor suggests he (“my contemplation”) will become the tool (“a smiting Hammer”) that beats his own hard heart into submission, whereas God (“thine authority”) supplies “a golden anvil.” Although Taylor’s imagery is perhaps exceptional in its graphic nature, most puritan churchgoers used metaphorical language about hearts that needed to be broken by God – language that far exceeds the only mention of such an idea in the Bible: “a contrite and a broken heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 51:17).²⁴ Puritan aesthetics, from sermons to poetry to life writing and meditations, are formed under the auspices of a broken heart – which presented the opening to a life of grace in this world and an eventual glorification into an eternal life to come.

Puritan Conversion Narratives in America

While any genre could explore how brokenheartedness indicated salvation in puritan writing, perhaps the best genre for understanding the meeting between aesthetics and theology is the puritan conversion narrative. These narratives were typically short – anywhere from a paragraph to a few pages in the preacher’s notebooks that recorded them – and include few factual details in order to focus instead on the effect of God’s blessings or punishments on the speaker’s soul.²⁵ Requiring public conversion

²⁴ Citation from the Geneva bible (1599). Other biblical instances of brokenheartedness (Ps. 147:3 and Isa. 61:1) refer to God healing and binding up the brokenhearted – which is different from a broken heart as a requirement for grace. For an extended consideration of puritan heart language, see Weimer, “Affliction and the Stony Heart in Early New England,” in *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World*, ed. Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda (London: Palgrave, 2016), 157–185.

²⁵ The largest collections of narratives are John Fiske, *The Notebook of the Reverend John Fiske, 1644–1675*, ed. Robert G. Pope (Boston: Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1974); and George Selement and Bruce T. Woolley, eds., *Thomas Shepard’s Confessions* (Boston: Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1981).

narratives for full church membership is a largely American practice.²⁶ The opportunity to partake in the Lord's Supper with only the elect was, for many, an important reason to come to the colonies. It was a communal ritual, and entry to it involved communal approval of an individual soul – again, a making visible, in recognizable forms, of the invisible heart. Each settler's story is thus, significantly, a synecdoche in that individual instances stand in for the saved status of the larger collective. Yet the narratives display none of the traits that are commonly thought to be American: aspirational, individualist, or exceptionalist. Congregants do not report their regions of origin, education, or marriages, but instead start with a first awareness of sin or a troubling, temporary, persistence in vice. The reason for this omission of real world events is not because age or hometown did not matter but, rather, because those characteristics were spiritually irrelevant: they revealed nothing of the state of one's soul. Curiously, most confessors do not conclude with a stable, secure sense of election or grace: instead, their stories feature incremental movements backward and forward along a sliding scale to salvation. The thoughtful, self-reflexive, and usually tearful interpretation of these minute maneuvers came to characterize a successful, acceptable conversion. In rendering these vicissitudes of faith, the confessors develop a characteristic idiom of events and tropes that qualified one for salvation – an idiom comprised of shared tears, immigration, and a broken heart.²⁷

Captain Roger Clap, who came over with the first puritan settlers in 1630, remembered late in his life “the many Tears that have been shed in Dorchester Meeting-House at such Times, both by those that have declared God's Work on their Souls, and also by those that heard them.”²⁸ The logic of weeping over one's election is perhaps not intuitive. Clap explained it as follows:

God did melt my Heart at that time so that I could, and did mourn and shed more Tears for Sin, than at other Times: Yea the Love of God, that he should Elect me, and save such a worthless one as I was, did break my very

²⁶ Although a few radical churches in Britain featured similar practices, the public performance and questioning of grace was unique to the New World. British accounts and the identifying traits of colonial American narratives are discussed in Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁷ Because all the confessions were recorded in rushed writing or even shorthand in the preachers' notebooks, they survive in alternate and inconsistent first- and third-person speech.

²⁸ *Memoirs of Roger Clap*, 1630 (Boston, 1844), 21. https://archive.org/stream/rogerclapoooclproger/rogerclapoooclproger_djvu.txt, accessed December 20, 2018.

Heart. I say again, When I had most Assurance of God's Love, I could mourn most for my Sins.²⁹

Here, an increased sensitivity, heralded by an increase in tears, yields more assurance of salvation. Godly sorrow focused on mourning for one's sins, but it could also turn on the proper use of afflictions. The puritans thus interpreted severe, long-lasting, even unbearable pain – such as emotional distress after the death of (grand)children or the loss of treasured possessions – as generally good signs: God was paying special attention to the afflicted individual's plight, through punishment, and the believer's agony could therefore be beneficial.³⁰ In this way, the right kind of pain could be seen as a blessing, and sharing that pain (by identifying with the speakers and crying alongside them) further disseminated the blessing across the community.

Alongside tears, two other elements of colonial aesthetics stand out: the discourse of having a hard (sinfully numb) or broken (painfully saved) heart – already explored above – and the repeated references to transatlantic migration as a spiritually significant event.³¹ Some parishioners thought of Europe as an evil, seductive place, which they sought to escape. Goodman Foster, for example, “arose to convictions of the evil of many provocations and some delight in that which was good . . . cause of his coming to this country.”³² He hoped to be less tempted and more spiritual in America, that the very place would improve him. John Dane similarly wrote: “I bent myself to come to New England, thinking that I should be more free here than there from temptations.”³³ Dane pictured New England as an unspoiled place, where he would “touch no unclean thing,” in contrast to the multitude of young women in his British bed.³⁴ The idea of America as completely empty, except for fellow puritans, prevails in many narratives.³⁵ This notion conveniently erased all Native peoples of New England, making colonialism out to be a much easier and less violent

²⁹ *Memoirs of Roger Clap*, 25–26.

³⁰ These examples are drawn from the poetry of Anne Bradstreet, *Works*, cf. 235–237, 292.

³¹ Sarah Rivett has also noted how “the Atlantic crossing became a vital allegory for a spiritual journey” in the conversion narratives of the puritans. Rivett, *Science of the Soul*, 70.

³² Fiske, *Notebook*, 89.

³³ Dane, “A Declaration of Remarkable Providence in the Course of My Life,” *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 5.3 (1854): 154. See also Meredith Marie Neuman, “Beyond Narrative: The Conversion Plot of John Dane’s ‘A Declaration of remarkable Providences,’” *Early American Literature* 40.2 (2005), 251–277.

³⁴ Dane, “A Declaration of Remarkable Providence.”

³⁵ Cf. Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 55.

project than it really was. The sympathy and fellowship that is so readily extended (through tears) in the colonial meetinghouse never includes Indians.³⁶

Many conversion narratives, meanwhile, dwelt on the difficulty of the decision to depart Europe. The narrative pace slows, as if lingering on England or Holland's shores. Many speakers claim to have been incapable of the life-altering choice to emigrate. Joan White describes "her heart being drawn to New England because good people came hither [and] at last by a providence coming over."³⁷ The "good people" who inspired White are now presumably judging her confession. Still, she eschews any real agency, crediting "providence" – divine intervention – with bringing her over the ocean. Dorcas Downey's narrative features a complex combination of worldly and religious hope: "The Lord was pleased to begin with me in England, living under [little?] means there. When trouble began, I was inclined to come hither for ordinances [proper worship], and forsaking relations, should find mercy, but I have not walked in any measure answerable to mercy."³⁸ Downey feels God helps her a little in England, by providing some "means" to grace (presumably the efforts of puritan clergy). Hoping for more and better means – the "ordinances" she perceived in New England – she left Europe and forsook her relations. Through suffering, therefore, Downey had hoped to "find mercy," but America brought only disappointment. The same went for Elizabeth Olbon, a seventeenth-century puritan émigré: "Since she came hither, she hath found her heart more dead and dull, etc. and being in much sickness when she came first into the land, she saw now how vain a thing it was to put confidence in any creature."³⁹ Olbon's loss of sensitivity, health, and trust bespeaks an inner and outer transformation caused by geographical change.

Arrival, contrary to expectations, often brought further despair and loneliness. Many confessors complain of a spiritual lapse contingent on their physical removal. The wife of Phineas Fiske, who "was encouraged to seek to join in fellowship," stated: "And when she came hither she found her heart so full of perturbation and distress."⁴⁰ Goodman Foster,

³⁶ This is not true for the meetinghouses in missionary villages such as Natick. On these, see Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, ch. 5; and Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

³⁷ Fiske, *Notebook*, 30.

³⁸ Mary Rhinelander McCarl, "Thomas Shepard's Record of Relations of Religious Experience, 1648–1649," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 48.3 (1991): 461.

³⁹ Selement and Woolley, *Thomas Shepard's Confessions*, 41. ⁴⁰ Fiske, *Notebook*, 44.

previously having “some delight in that which was good,” and wishing to escape temptation, complained that here he was “left in a more flat condition than before.”⁴¹ Contrary to their expectations, the puritans felt religiously challenged, even forsaken in the New World: “here he was *left*.” Many accounts interpret the sorrow caused by immigration as a severe spiritual setback. Barbary Cutter described feeling lost and alone: “Though she went through with many miseries and stumbling blocks at last removed and sad passages by sea. And after I came hither I saw my condition more miserable than ever. [I] knew not what to do, and spoke to none as knowing none like me.”⁴² The idea of solitude here is striking and directly opposite to the fellowship that so many settlers sought. Admittedly, in a conversion narrative, the speakers might mention friendlessness in order to gain friends by being welcomed into the fold of church membership. But the language of abandonment and disappointment in America occurs so often in diaries and letters that it becomes characteristic of puritan religious experience and aesthetics.⁴³

When we listen to the parishioners in New England, their testimonies sound different from those of their English counterparts, writes Patricia Caldwell in her comparative study of English and American puritan narratives, “both in factual (or historical) reference and in literary character and technique.”⁴⁴ It is worth dwelling on that analysis: “literary character and technique” – which include metaphors, tone, and plot – is different in the New World. Alongside the details of performance and embodiment, this literary character is an important part of colonial aesthetics. It is only in the America that “a kind of grim, gray disappointment . . . emerges in conversion stories as an almost obligatory structural element.”⁴⁵ Of all the things that could cause these differences – climate, acoustics, the preachers’ preconceptions – only one textual trope stands out: “the American version of deliverance is,” she writes, “imaginatively mediated and substantively affected by a real geographical place.”⁴⁶ The experience of foreign surroundings – of living in, as Bradstreet says, “a new world” – changed the form of this public ritual and lies at the core of puritan aesthetics. A more recent form of this argument can be found in the work of Kathleen Donegan, who finds in the writing of the Pilgrims a deeply felt sense of

⁴¹ Fiske, *Notebook*, 89. ⁴² Selement and Woolley, *Thomas Shepard's Confessions*, 90.

⁴³ Cf. David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), ch. 8.

⁴⁴ Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative*, 31.

⁴⁵ Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative*, 5.

⁴⁶ Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative*, 26.

disorientation, a loss of identity engendered by the radical encounter with a new environment, new people, and a new way of life – which in turn links puritan literature to literature of English colonialism elsewhere in the Atlantic.⁴⁷

Aside from tears and migration, the final and most important part of puritan aesthetics registered by conversion narratives is the repeated references to a hard or broken heart. Some believers not only felt spiritually worse off in America; they stopped feeling anything at all. In the case of Mary Angier Sparrowhawk, “there [in New England] she found her heart more hard and [in]sensible, but hoped to be better here than worse than ever before. Every sermon made her worse, and [she] sat like a block under all means and thought God had left her to a hard heart and that all her fears were come upon her.”⁴⁸ Dead or hard hearts, though terrifying, were common in colonial Massachusetts. Mistress Joseph Cooke, who “had lived in a very ignorant place,” confessed that “when I came here I found my heart altogether dead and unprofitable under means.”⁴⁹ Mentioning “means” (which, as stated above, refers to the methods and instruments of grace by which God, through ministers and fellow congregants, brought lost sheep into the fold) was often an extra indictment of the self in the conversion narratives: to be lost is one thing, but to persist in sin despite an abundance of the means of grace indicates a particularly stubborn fallen character.

Overcoming the converts’ disconcerting absence of feeling are illness, bereavement, and other forms of suffering. Repeated violence, inflicted by God on believers’ hardened souls or hearts, becomes a mainstay of colonial conversions. For example, both Anne Bradstreet (in her poetry) and Mistress Crackbone respond to the burning of their houses with thoughts of God’s mercy and justice. Crackbone recalls: “And so being married and having poor means and having afflictions on my child and took from me, and so troubled what became of my children, and to hell I thought it was because I had not prayed for them. And so came to New England. I forgot the Lord as the Israelites did.”⁵⁰ Crackbone seems to have lost a child and blames herself for the child’s presumed damnation, “because [she] had not prayed for them.” Another woman, Martha Collins, similarly wrote: “meeting with sorrows and feeling no life in ordinances I thought I was

⁴⁷ Kathleen Donegan, *Seasons of Misery: Catastrophe and Colonial Settlement in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ Selement and Woolley, *Thomas Shepard’s Confessions*, 66.

⁴⁹ McCarl, “Thomas Shepard’s Record,” 460.

⁵⁰ Selement and Woolley, *Thomas Shepard’s Confessions*, 140.

sealed up. Then one child was struck with me and then I struggled with God and so then pulled down.”⁵¹ In both narratives, the children do not simply die but are “struck” and “took” by God in emphatically hostile actions. In these instances, the puritan universe in which an all-powerful deity preys on children in order to prove a point to their mothers seems light-years away from modern Christianity. Crackbone compares herself to the Old Testamental Jews: “I forgot the lord as the Israelites did,” who were also punished for their straying from God’s way.⁵² She says:

And so came to new England. I forgot the Lord as the Israelites did and when I had a new house yet I thought I had no new heart. . . . And so saw sloth and sluggishness so I prayed to the Lord to make me fit for church fellowship and Lord. And the more I prayed the more temptation I had. So I gave up and I was afraid to sing because to sing a lie. . . . And seeing house burned down, I thought it was just and mercy.⁵³

With a talent for alliteration (“house . . . heart . . . sloth . . . sluggishness . . . fit . . . fellowship”), Crackbone narrates how powerless she is to change her state: more prayer actually has an adverse effect. She therefore stops singing (and presumably praying), only to find a sense of justice when her house burns down. That occurrence, she figures, perhaps finally pays penance for her unsaved, dead child: “And seeing house burned down, I thought it was just and mercy to save life of the child.” In this logic of self-blame, one tragedy needs another one for redress. By extension, one might argue, why not burn all that was left and save oneself too? That is precisely Crackbone’s inclination: “And as my spirit was fiery to burn all I had, and hence prayed Lord send fire of word, baptize me with fire.” After this tantalizing evocation of salvific pyromania, she flatly concludes: “and since the Lord hath set my heart at liberty” and stops speaking. Her story of losing a child and a house, followed by the transformation of utter powerlessness (in prayer) into fire-setting fury qualifies her for church membership. Migration, pain, and a hard heart combine to create an

⁵¹ Selement and Woolley, *Thomas Shepard’s Confessions*, 131.

⁵² Scholars have argued persuasively that this self-comparison – of the puritans to the Jews – underlay religion, politics, and everyday life in early New England. This equation, known as typology, puts forth an idea of the puritans (and Pilgrims) as God’s new chosen people settling their promised land: America. Although earlier scholars would surely have cast typology as an integral element of puritan aesthetics, I do not because typology was also widely used by other persecuted Protestants, including German Pietist groups in the American colonies. It is therefore not typically or recognizably puritan. For scholarship on puritan typology, see Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956); and Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

⁵³ Selement and Woolley, *Thomas Shepard’s Confessions*, 140.

acceptable, even characteristic puritan account of conversion. What matters here is how a puritan aesthetics governed the sayable and the unsayable – including the form in which conversion narratives were told – because the ability to be moved by the narrative required recognizing it as a visible expression of grace, and recognizing the narration as a visible expression of grace required being moved by it.

All that work came down to the heart. Narratives turned on the heart of the speaker, which was assessed by its resonance (or not) in the hearts of listeners. During public confessions of faith, “no other word performed what the ‘heart’ did, and no other word today quite replaces it.”⁵⁴ This rhetoric not only assured entry into the community of saved “saints”; it also united that community. Roger Clap, who earlier wrote about the shared tears in the Dorchester meeting house, describes this exact process in the meetinghouse: when a “stranger . . . came into the Congregation where I was [and spoke about how] he feared God; and upon the very Report thereof my Heart was knit unto him, altho’ I never spake with him that I know of.”⁵⁵ Here, the language of the heart forms a clear instance of Rancièrian aesthetics – both creating and cementing the colonial community.

Native American Puritan Conversion Narratives

Feelings played an important role in puritan conversion narratives, and puritan missionaries stressed the importance of these feelings and their origin in the heart to their Wampanoag followers. Moreover, simply feeling right in itself would not suffice; the Praying Indians had to convincingly communicate their affections to puritan preachers. In 1658, Eliot, in a bilingual broadside, explicitly prescribes proper penitential performance:

Nish noh sampwae aiuscoiantwaenin, mahche p:p:namit, pish muttoonoe zampoowam oonamtamaoonk papaume God, kah Christ, kah Nashauanit ; kah papaume onkatoganish catichifae nahnauunue kuhkootemwel teaon-gash. Kah wame yeush pish hahpeateawussinneash, o:k:who nootogig noowoag, yeuoh wahnammuhkut sampwutteahaenin, kah wuttap:eonk.

Every penitent confessor agreed on, shall personally make his Oral confession of his Faith, Doctrinal and Experimental by rehearsing (*Memoniter*) the Covenanting Confession [*for matter*] as for minor in such a serious and

⁵⁴ Selement and Woolley, *Thomas Shepard's Confessions*, 11.

⁵⁵ *Memoirs*, 23.

Reverent manner, as may make it to appear that his confession of Faith cometh from his heart sincerely.⁵⁶

The Indians were well aware of the rhetorical requirements of conversion: one of them admits having “heard that my heart must break and melt for sin.”⁵⁷ These representative strategies and the turn to observable bodily suffering become insistent as the confessions continue.

The accounts of missionary success were published in a series of pamphlets known as the “Eliot tracts,” after the main missionary John Eliot. In the tracts, metaphors of the heart are supplemented by different accounts of real suffering and death, along with subsequent advantageous spiritual effects. This is how descriptions of great starvation – probably referring to two separate episodes of crisis and catastrophe – appear in the context of conversion. The unidentified epidemic of 1616–1619 killed 50–90 percent of the Native population in the areas stretching about thirty miles inland from Massachusetts Bay. Successive outbreaks of smallpox after 1633 devastated the communities that were left, as well as those further away that were not affected earlier.⁵⁸ Algonquin conversion narratives offer glimpses of the annihilation of the population of southern New England not only to strengthen their Christian appeal but also, presumably, to remember and memorialize these traumatic events.

In their narratives, the fear and despair of the Wampanoag survivors are at times palpable: “I thought in my heart, that if my friends should die, and I live, I then would pray to God; soon after, God so wrought, that they did almost all die, few of them left; and then my heart feared.”⁵⁹ Ponam-pian relates a terrifying episode of paternal foresight: “While my Father lives, and I was young, I was at play, and my Father rebuked me, and said, we shall all die shortly. . . . That same Winter the pox came; all my kindred died.”⁶⁰ Unlike puritan interpretations of these events, which contribute to what Cristobal Silva has called part of the “master narrative” wherein God conveniently killed the coastal Indian tribes to make room for English

⁵⁶ John Eliot, *Mag, waj who nashpe nutayi nun wahashae wunauchemoockae moeuweekomunch, ut ooweswong anit Jesus Christ. The way we walk in when we call up the Indian towns and Parishes into the order of visible Gospel Churches* (1658). In Algonquian and English. Two-page fragment in the Houghton Library Collection, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

⁵⁷ John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew, Jr., *Tears of Repentance, or, A further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New-England* (London, 1653). Reprinted in Michael Clark, ed., *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 280.

⁵⁸ O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, 5. ⁵⁹ Eliot and Mayhew, *Tears of Repentance*, 269.

⁶⁰ John Eliot, *A Further Account of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New England* (London, 1660). Reprinted in Clark, ed., *The Eliot Tracts*, 385.

imperialism, the Wampanoag narratives resist a Christian explanation for what has befallen the Indians.⁶¹ Although “God so wrought” the plagues that entire communities were wiped out, Wampanoag converts claim that this shows the foresight of Indian fathers, not their sinful nature.

Instead of the usual English form of conversion narrative, some of the Indians’ descriptions take the nature of religious bargaining for life or healing, a tit-for-tat idea of grace that was frowned on by puritan exegetes: “Five years ago, before I prayed I was sick, I thought I should die; at which I was much troubled . . . then I thought, if there be a God above, and he give me life again, then I shall believe there is a God above.”⁶² Still others flat out deny the existence of God based on the indiscriminate dying around them: “God laid upon me more trouble, by sickness and death; and then I much prayed to God for life; but first one of my children died, and after that my Wife; then I was in great sorrow, because I thought God would not hear me.”⁶³ Within the strictures of puritan confession, scholars have suggested that these instances show memorializations of the devastating epidemics in ways that connect to early Native traditions of oratory. For example, Craig White writes that the confessions should be read “as extensions of Native antecedents,” particularly with regard to what he calls the “‘connectedness’ of the Indians’ rhetorical strategies.”⁶⁴ White’s opinion is especially evocative because it suggests the structural endurance of older forms that are transferred by these new expressions.

What is happening here, then, could be interpreted as a recording of what puritans could not see or acknowledge. Puritan literature encodes more than what puritans hoped to encode, which can be understood in aesthetic terms. To use Rancière’s formulations: Native converts were using forms that puritans *could* recognize in order to register what they could not – they were redistributing the sensible, bringing more to sense perception as they voiced the unvoiced. When we think about puritan aesthetics, we can look to the forms in which they hoped to move others and be moved by them (including what those movements of the heart meant to them), but we can also see how those forms erected conditions of inclusion and exclusion – and how the excluded kept intruding through the very forms that rendered them invisible.

⁶¹ Cristobal Silva, *Miraculous Plagues: An Epidemiology of Early New England Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 3.

⁶² Eliot and Mayhew, *Tears of Repentance*, 291. ⁶³ Eliot and Mayhew, *Tears of Repentance*, 278.

⁶⁴ White, “The Praying Indians’ Speeches as Texts of Massachusetts Oral Culture,” 439, 441.

In summary, this chapter has considered the elements of puritan aesthetics as they appear in both poetry and conversion narratives. The shared stories of migration, related through tears and hesitation in the colonial meetinghouse, created a new code for acceptable and knowable conversion. The interpretation of physical pain and loss as divine mercy creates a peculiarly masochistic discourse that stems, in part, from sermons, meditations, and small books on piety that were cheap and widely distributed. A great deal of puritan literature is centered on a paradox surrounding the (metaphorical) heart. The language of the heart allowed puritans to express inner experiences that in those expressions were made sensible, knowable, and touched others' hearts. At the same time, puritan believers remained remarkably unaware or indifferent to the realities of colonial settlement and its attendant displacement and destruction of Native culture and lives. It remains its own paradox that a people who begged for affliction, broken hearts, and divine violence on Sundays could so casually inflict oblitative violence on the Native American communities that surrounded them. The discursive figure of the heart – denoting honesty, inwardness, sincerity, the essential self – takes on special importance and valence in the colonial context, wherein the state of one's soul justifies the tremendous expense and effort of migration and qualifies one to squat, farm, and vote on the lands of those whose hearts do not matter or cannot be recognized.

CHAPTER 9

Gender

Tamara Harvey

The problem with schoolroom caricatures of severe puritan patriarchs judging jezebels and witches while content but constrained goodwives look on, at least from a gender perspective, is not that this picture is wrong so much as that it is static. Sexual and social submission characterized femininity not only in puritan America but throughout much of European and Euro-American culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Patriarchal authority was one element of masculine performance for elite men in the public sphere and for nonelites domestically. But most men had to submit to their “betters” within more strictly observed social hierarchies, while puritans stressed a spiritual relationship with God rooted in radical submission and deeply felt, unearned love that was often represented through figures of femininity. In the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud wrote with regard to the development of femininity in girls that “to achieve a passive aim may call for a large amount of activity.”¹ Puritans would have substituted “submissive” for “passive,” but they too understood that submitting to another, most importantly God, demands a paradoxical effort. That paradox was frequently figured using gendered tropes. When Edward Taylor uses the conceit of spinning, weaving, and dyeing cloth in his poem “Huswifery” as part of the spiritual preparation for submitting his will to be “Cloathd in Holy robes for glory,” traditionally female domestic labor and the labor of weaving a poetic conceit open the way for giving up human effort and submitting to God’s will.² In addition to these female tropes associated with submission to God, puritan theology and congregationalist church organization afforded women new

¹ Sigmund Freud, “Femininity,” in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1965), 115.

² Edward Taylor, *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, ed. Donald E. Stanford (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 343.

opportunities for both sanctioned and unsanctioned religious activity.³ Scholars have associated both the figural uses of femininity and the practical opportunities for women with “female piety.”

In this chapter I focus primarily on three broad areas in which gender was shaped and debated within American puritanism. The first is spiritual practices, especially as reflected in puritan conversion narratives. Here we see some of the most specifically puritan expressions of gender, which demonstrate a more mobile relationship between femininity and masculinity than stereotypes might suggest. Conversion narratives also constitute an important location for women’s public discourse particular to New England puritanism. The second is trials, the location of some of the best-known dramas of gender conflict that continue to incite and entertain modern audiences. In looking at trials we get a better sense of how civil and religious law come together in the early New England colonies. We also get a glimpse into how class, race, and ethnicity inflect characterizations of gender. And despite the disciplinary framework, we also see another form of female agency and gender debate. Finally, I look at the poet Anne Bradstreet’s treatment of gendered embodiment.

Though the gender politics of puritan New England have resonated with that of later periods, puritan understanding of gender was grounded in evolving anatomical theories that differed from our own and were deployed in a public arena in which, as Anne Myles has observed, “distinctions between sex and religion collapsed because it seemed entirely logical to assume upsetters of order in one dimension were or would readily become threats to others as well. When holiness and civic peace were at stake, hetero-normative sexuality was as well, and vice versa.”⁴ Thomas Laqueur’s *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* is perhaps the most influential study of the “one-sex” model in this period.⁵ This anatomical theory sees women as essentially less fully developed men, biologically speaking, with consequences for social

³ Catholicism offered religious and worldly opportunities for activity to both lay and cloistered women. In the seventeenth century, pietistic practices included published accounts of lay spirituality such as the epistolary exchange between François de Sales and his cousin, Madame de Charmoisy, in *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609) that have been read as Catholic responses to Protestant spirituality. Still, women’s participation as members of puritan congregations and their engagement in the public dissent practices used by puritans and other English dissenters during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century are distinct.

⁴ Anne G. Myles, “Queering the Study of Early American Sexuality,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60.1 (2003): 201.

⁵ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

constructions of gender as well. At the same time, women were associated with the body and men with the spirit, though as the frequent assertion by early feminists that “the soul has no sex” attests, the hierarchies emerging from these associations were contested.⁶ Men and women alike were feminized spiritually with respect to God and in the world as subordinates to others. *People* were invited or required to debate and testify, and insofar as female people did this, their testimony frequently belied the submission demanded of them. In other words, femininity did not map exclusively or exactly onto women. Within puritanism, femininity is often poised not at one end of a polar binary between male and female, but as bridging the gap between spirit and body, literal and figural in ways that help masculinity cohere while exacerbating the gender bias experienced by women.

Spirituality and Conversion Narratives

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

—Song of Solomon 1.1

The requirement that congregants deliver conversion narratives in order to gain full church membership was one of the most distinctive practices of New England congregationalism.⁷ It was not enough to attest to one's belief in a set of religious tenets; one needed to tell a story that demonstrated both one's struggles and one's experience of saving grace, “true, imperfect assurance” according to the “morphology of conversion” by which these narratives were judged.⁸ These required narratives were an important site of gender construction, both because conversion narratives and sermons about conversion used marriage metaphors and feminized figurative language and because women participated actively and publicly in composing and presenting their own spiritual narratives (for instance, nearly half the conversion narratives recorded in Thomas Shepard's notebook are by women).⁹ Women and men were allowed membership in

⁶ See Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), for a wide-ranging exploration of notions of gender in the early modern period including the influence of this neoplatonic mantra on early feminists. See also Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989): 169.

⁷ Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 66.

⁸ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 72.

⁹ See Michael McGiffert, ed., *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*, revised ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994).

New England's congregationalist churches, and though in some communities women delivered their narratives privately, in others men and women alike delivered their narratives in front of the entire congregation.

One important biblical source for figuring the process of conversion, or "closing with Christ," was the lovers' song in Canticles (Song of Solomon), with the believer as Bride and Christ as Bridegroom. Though the Judeo-Christian tradition had long read Canticles as an allegory of the relationship between God and the church, interpretations of its eroticism and of its representation of marriage in terms of individual spirituality and church covenant receive particularly puritan inflections in seventeenth-century New England.¹⁰ Theologically, puritan efforts to subordinate human interpretation to divine will required a radical submission well figured by the bride's submission to the bridegroom, while the language of desire gave voice to a sense of profound, unearned love. But as Amanda Porterfield argues, "even as their piety was shaped by this received tradition of imagining grace as an eager bride and the church as a devoted wife, puritans redefined the implications of this tradition by interpreting it in the context of domestic life . . . Puritan ministers conflated marriage as a trope of grace with marriage as a social construct and thereby invested relationships between husbands and wives with religious meaning."¹¹ In both erotic and marital readings, the relationship between figurative and literal, spiritual and social had important consequences for the construction of both masculinity and femininity. In striving to account for their states of grace, that is, their relationship to a divine order that exceeds human comprehension in language that is unavoidably of this world, men and women both replicated and challenged gender conventions.

John Winthrop's intimate description of closing with Christ provides a vivid example of imagery from Canticles used to represent the soul as Bride to Christ as Bridegroom. Having recognized that "I was worthy of nothing for I knew I could do nothing for [Christ] or for my self," Winthrop experiences a spiritual transformation:

¹⁰ According to Michael Winship, the use of marital imagery in puritan sermons to figure the relationship between Christ and the elect had largely disappeared by the eighteenth century as expressions of intense personal relationships with Christ changed in response to political and social changes. Michael P. Winship, "Behold the Bridegroom Cometh! Marital Imagery in Massachusetts Preaching, 1630–1730," *Early American Literature* 27.3 (1992): 171.

¹¹ Amanda Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3–4. See also Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion*, 23–27, for a discussion of the ways that assumptions about worldly marriage limit the liberatory potential of gendered tropes during this period.

I did not long continue in this estate, but the good spirit of the Lord breathed upon my soule, and said I should live. Then every promise I thought upon held forth Christ unto mee saying I am thy salvation. Now could my soule close with Christ, and rest there with sweet content, so ravished with his Love, as I desired nothing nor feared any thing, but was filled with joy unspeakable and glorious and with a spirit of Adoption. Not that I could pray with more fervency or more enlargement of heart than sometimes before, but I could now cry my father with more confidence... I was now growne familiar with the Lord Jesus Christ hee would oft tell mee he loved mee. I did not doubt to believe him; If I went abroad hee went with me, when I returned hee came home with mee. I talked with him upon the way, hee lay down with me, and usually I did awake with him. Now I could goe into any company and not lose him: and so sweet was his love to me, as I desired nothing but him in heaven or earth.¹²

Winthrop characterizes himself as both bride and child in this passage, lying down with Christ and feeling his love but also finding himself able to “cry my father with more confidence.” One of the challenges of conversion narratives was to express a feeling of saving grace without falling into the error of certainty. Both the limits of human language and the fallibility of individual perceptions make this difficult, so when Winthrop describes himself as “filled with joy unspeakable,” the issue of expressibility is significant. Using the figurative language of Canticles gives him one way to approach that which is unspeakable, as does the sensual language of taste and breath – everything is sweet and proximate in this passage.

Ivy Schweitzer associates this use of female imagery with what Alice Jardine calls *gynesis*, a rhetorical use of “woman-as-effect” that helps express the inexpressible.¹³ “‘Woman’ is not a person,” Schweitzer explains, “but a rhetorical position of subordination and subservience to God – which then, all too easily, gets confused with women.”¹⁴ Schweitzer goes on to observe that puritan men like Winthrop “appropriated female imagery, but only as a necessary phase on the way to the remasculinization offered by the puritan conversion narrative in which, ultimately, God adopts the saint

¹² John Winthrop, “John Winthrop’s Relation of His Religious Experience, 1637,” in *Winthrop Papers*, vol. 3 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1943), 342–343. The Winthrop Papers are also digitized and available online; see www.masshist.org/publications/winthrop/index.php.

¹³ Ivy Schweitzer, *The Work of Self-Representation: Lyric Poetry in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 112. My own work in *Figuring Modesty* argues that the feminism of early American women resides most significantly in their challenges to this *gynesis* rather than in their direct rebuttals to overt misogyny. My discussion of Anne Hutchinson and Anne Bradstreet below draws on this work. See Tamara Harvey, *Figuring Modesty in Feminist Discourse across the Americas, 1636–1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

¹⁴ Schweitzer, *Work of Self-Representation*, 20.

as his son and heir and woman/women disappear.”¹⁵ While they might figure themselves as brides, their worldly positions as fathers and husbands gave them authority over wives and daughters. For men this split between spiritual submission and worldly power reflects a duality in their experiences of power, but for women the conflation of woman and child in Winthrop’s conversion narrative demonstrates the uneasy overlap between spiritual and social submission with which women were expected to conform at the cost of being both decision-making adult subjects and child-like dependents in reason as well as wealth. Conventional gender hierarchies held that women were less responsible, less capable, and less reasonable than men; in other words, they were like children. Under the laws of coverture, adult women had no legal standing if they were married; in the church women were equal in grace but were expected to submit to husbands and fathers as well as ministers and magistrates.

It is important to note that men too were expected to submit; this is another area where a gendered analogy described relationships among men, while marital laws and conventions shaped women’s experiences. In his diary, Winthrop records his speech answering charges that “magistrates exercised too much power, and that the people’s liberty was thereby in danger.”¹⁶ His argument is telling in its use of marriage as an analogy that likens both the church’s relationship to God and citizens’ relationships to magistrates to proper relations between husband and wife:

This liberty is maintained and exercised in a way of subjection to authority; it is of the same kind of liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. The woman’s own choice makes such a man her husband; yet being so chosen, he is her lord, and she is to be subject to him, yet in a way of liberty, not of bondage; and a true wife accounts her subjection her honour and freedom, and would not think her condition safe and free, but in her subjection to her husband’s authority. Such is the authority of the church under the authority of Christ, her king and husband... Even so, brethren, it will be between you and your magistrates.¹⁷

Winthrop’s 1645 speech to the General Court (often called his “Little Speech on Liberty”) attempts to align the public operation of civic life with the personal experience of salvation and the intermediate space of household governance, a space that is at once private and public. While the

¹⁵ Schweitzer, *Work of Self-Representation*, 27.

¹⁶ John Winthrop, *The History of New England from 1630–1649*, ed. James Savage (Salem, NH: Ayer, 1992), 2: 226.

¹⁷ Winthrop, *History*, 229–230.

spiritual submission Winthrop recounts in his conversion narrative is a matter not of choice but of radical submission, when it comes to earthly covenants between man and wife or magistrates and citizens, subjection is both chosen “in a way of liberty, not of bondage” and demanded by established authority. Erotic language infuses his spiritual submission, while the language of contract and obedience informs his attempt to align social hierarchies with spiritual principles. For women, neither civil nor domestic authority were expected or legitimate in the eyes of most puritans, which allows Winthrop to use a “true” wife’s obedience to her husband as an analogy in this speech. But in the church, women’s spiritual insights *did* have some authority, raising issues about both their public expression of spirituality and their participation in other discussions relevant to congregants. And even outside the church, women did not necessarily obey; the “true” in Winthrop’s statement stands as tacit admonition of wayward women but also admits that this submission is not inevitable or perhaps even natural.

While the alignment of spiritual, marital, and civil covenants puts one form of stress on the figurative language of conversion narrative, the requirement that church membership demands “A personall & publick *confession*, & declaring of Gods manner of working upon the soul,” according to the Cambridge Platform of 1648, creates other strains related to public expression of personal experiences.¹⁸ The Cambridge Platform of 1648 makes provisions for those who “through excessive fear, or other infirmity” cannot “make their personal *relation* of their spiritual estate in publick” and admonishes congregations to use “*charity & tenderness*” when dealing with “the weakest christian if sincere.”¹⁹ Women and men surely felt fear when they spoke and made weak but earnest cases for their admission, but women were additionally hampered by widely held objections to women’s public speech. In his record of a meeting of the Wenham church in 1644, John Fiske reports, “Some agitation was about women making their relations in public, occasioned from the practice of some churches to the contrary.” Fiske’s argument in favor of this public speech is that St. Paul forbids speech that “argues power,” as in prophecy, but conversion narratives are not powerful: “[T]his kind of speaking is by submission where others are to judge &c. and to the glory of God, as

¹⁸ Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1960), 223. See also Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 46.

¹⁹ Walker, *Creeds and Platforms*, 222–223.

Deborah, Mary, Elizabeth, Anne, &c. And resolved that they should make their relations personally in public; grounds, because the whole church is to judge of their meetness which cannot so well be if she speak not herself.”²⁰

Those opposed to women’s public speech in the Wenham congregation cited 1 Corinthians 14:34–35: “Let your women keep silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak: but *they ought* to be subject, as also the Law saith. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the Church.” One can hardly overstate the significance of these verses for Catholic and Protestant women alike, whether the discourse in question is spiritual narrative, poetry, or trial testimony. The expectation that women should be silent in public places and discourses had to be overcome; in trials and literary works, women regularly justified their public speech through expressions of humility, modesty, necessity, or reluctance that made public speech safe and appropriate.²¹ In the case of women’s public conversion narratives, ministers made the case to congregations and each other and in doing so generally found ways to argue that this speech was submissive and not a threat to patriarchal power. That they needed to make these arguments indicates a problem that persists despite their best efforts: a tension between feminine spiritual maturity and female worldly dependence informs the metaphorical language animating conversion narratives like Winthrop’s but also the contradictory experiences of women called to speak in public.

This tension has been explained by scholars in ways that reflect their approaches to rhetorical power and its relationship to figures of femininity. Schweitzer’s approach to *gynesis* stresses the power of metaphorical language. She suggests that feminine metaphors and particularly the more eroticized portrayals of the soul as bride were unavailable to women both because they could not make use of the rhetorical tension of adopting a feminine position since they were already women and because the sexualized language would have been too brazen. In other words, for women the literal level of allusions to sexuality and gender could not be effectively

²⁰ John Fiske, *The Notebook of the Reverend John Fiske, 1644–1675*, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, vol. 47, ed. Robert G. Pope (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1974), 4.

²¹ For a helpful overview of how St. Paul’s treatment of female speech was traditionally understood, see Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory & Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 274–275.

separated from the figurative level.²² Elizabeth Maddock Dillon looks instead to the problem of choice and obedience in the public sphere. She finds in Fiske's defense of women's conversion narratives and Winthrop's understanding that wives and citizens gain "honour and freedom" through choosing to submit to authority an uneasy tension between choice and submission that troubles traditional hierarchies of the church, state, and household. This tension indicates a proto-liberal subjectivity as "contractual conceptions of status" emerge alongside older social hierarchies. "The volitional marriage contract as a structure of welding private to public through the mechanisms (or even erotics) of desire and the desire for social recognition points to an evolving reorganization of authority, gender, and representation."²³ In her analysis of how puritan efforts to find evidence of grace intersect with the new science, Sarah Rivett combines attention to figurative language with a consideration of what it means for women to assert themselves as speaking subjects within a discourse aimed at investigating that which is hidden and ultimately unverifiable. She argues that men are simultaneously Adam and Bride, metaphorically speaking. "Humiliation prepares the heart for melting down the tarnished inner self to create a space for Christ's seed to flow into the hollow cast of the sinner as Adam." Moreover, the form of men's conversion narratives stresses an "I" that constitutes itself through the process of conversion. "'I saw,' 'I found,' and 'I examined' are often, almost exclusively, used by men to convey a self-authorizing testimony of empirical discovery." Women, Rivett argues, can be neither Adam nor Bride, and "first-generation women show a reluctance to engage in experiential religious empiricism, to claim the signs of grace as their own autonomous discovery, and to reliably witness to the evidence of their own soul."²⁴ Either the specific formal tropes of puritan conversion narratives as seen in the Bride or Adam are less accessible to women or the self-examining "I" is less rhetorically accessible because of the conventions of gendered discourse or the influence of general prohibitions against women's speech in church.

Throughout these discussions of puritanism and femininity, women's conversion narratives are often characterized according to what they do *not* do. Schweitzer notes that women avoid the metaphorical eroticism of Canticles. Rivett finds that women are less apt to assert a "self-authorizing

²² Schweitzer, *Work of Self-Representation*, 34.

²³ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 108, 113.

²⁴ Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 101–102, 106, 111.

‘I.’” Caldwell observes that women in New England, unlike women in England, do not discuss personal experiences of childbirth and family.²⁵ Some of this definition through negatives emerges from the way dominant conceptions of femininity and women’s experiences mobilize the figurative language of puritan men while limiting the narrative possibilities for women. But women were not only avoiding gendered tropes as a form of self-editing; at times, as we shall see, women actively refused these tropes, particularly when their public presence was framed by limiting gendered narratives, as in trials or literary publication. And though figures of femininity, particularly when they were animated by the paradox of a male-bodied person taking on a female position, may not have been accessible to female-bodied people, at times being a woman could be a benefit in spiritual narratives. For instance, Lisa Gordis argues that in some ways the conjunctions between human and divine bridegroom for Anne Bradstreet and other puritan women made it “easier for women to negotiate their metaphorical and physical marriages.”²⁶ When contrasted with the more contentious public speech of trials, conversion narratives seem to be one place where overdetermined gendered narratives can serve or simply be avoided by many women as they pursue an honest spiritual account.

Trials

“Do you think it not lawful for me to teach women and why do you
call me to teach the court?”

—Anne Hutchinson²⁷

In the context of trials, women’s public speech would seem to be by definition given “by submission.” If puritan spirituality used feminine imagery and reworked the symbolism of marriage to figure and encourage humility, obedience, and love in believers’ relationships with God, the puritan legal system mobilized and enforced gender norms in ways that illuminate both what was expected and how those expectations were constantly challenged. In 1637, Anne Hutchinson was tried for her part in what has come to be known as the Antinomian Controversy, a trial that fed political debate on both sides of the Atlantic. Near the end of the

²⁵ Caldwell, *Puritan Conversion Narrative*, 26.

²⁶ Lisa M. Gordis, “‘Jesus loves your girl more than you do’: Marriage as Triangle in Evangelical Romance and Puritan Narratives,” in *Romance Fiction and American Culture: Love as the Practice of Freedom?*, ed. William A. Gleason and Eric Murphy Selinger (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016), 342.

²⁷ David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638*, 2nd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 315.

century, the Salem witchcraft trials likewise compelled an international audience, while executions of accused fornicators and infanticides, often low-status servants of various races, were well attended events with published accounts of the sermons and executions circulating widely. And yet in all these cases there were opportunities for women on trial to express themselves, even debating puritan doctrine. For lower-class and nonwhite women, we often have no other way to access their voices in the archive. Trials frequently made a spectacle of women's bodies, both in the judicial proceedings themselves and in the circulating publications emerging from those proceedings, a kind of publicity that paradoxically amplified public display while attempting to discipline women for challenging authority and disrupting the social order. These spectacles and the critiques they drew from men and women alike played a role in shaping gender among New England puritans. One challenge we face in considering how gender is performed and debated through trials and associated documents is determining how to understand the relationship between spectacle and debate, the imposition of authority and the exchange of testimony. The conflict between prohibition and demand with regard to women's public speech and disagreements over reading women's bodies as evidence of sin and crime are two contested areas that reflect puritan ideas about gender.

In 1637, Anne Hutchinson stood trial in the Massachusetts Bay colony as "one of those that have troubled the peace of the commonwealth and the churches here," charged with having "spoken divers things as we have been informed very prejudicial to the honour of the churches and ministers thereof."²⁸ A devout puritan who followed her minister, John Cotton, in embracing a radical spiritism, Hutchinson held weekly meetings called conventicles in her house, which were well attended and during which she reportedly accused prominent ministers of preaching a covenant of works – that is, of putting too much stress on human agency in preparing oneself for, and assuring oneself of, salvation. Her self-defense in both this civil trial and her later ecclesiastical trial focuses on the relationship between grace and works in puritan theology while making evident emerging differences over how theological discussions should be conducted among those speaking from conscience.²⁹ Only one charge in John Winthrop's opening statement at her civil trial explicitly addresses gender: "you have maintained a meeting and an assembly in your house that hath been

²⁸ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 312.

²⁹ See Lisa M. Gordis, *Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 180; and Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom*, 61.

condemned by the general assembly as a thing not tolerable nor comely in the sight of God or fitting for your sex.”³⁰ And yet it is this charge and the ensuing debate about women’s public participation in theological matters that has captured the imagination of later generations, while in her own time, Hutchinson’s unruly body was repeatedly invoked in pamphlets that circulated on both sides of the Atlantic.

The charge that Hutchinson’s conventicles were “not tolerable or comely in the sight of God” drew on the same verse that Fiske mentions in his discussion of women’s public conversion narratives, 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Hutchinson rebuts this charge with competing verses from St. Paul, Titus 2:3–5, in which the elder women are called on to be “teachers of honest things” to “young women.” In this, Hutchinson joins other defenders of women’s public discourse who need to overcome St. Paul’s prohibition.³¹ But while 1 Corinthians 14 is used specifically to police women’s participation in public discourse, an associated charge leveled by Winthrop that Hutchinson has broken the fifth commandment, “Honour thy father and they mother,” applies more broadly to both men and women who have defied the court’s public authority. During Hutchinson’s civil trial, Winthrop characterizes members of her “faction” as children who have broken this commandment, though eight years later, in the 1645 speech discussed above, he instead likens those who must submit to public authority to wives who submit to their husbands out of choice and “in a way of liberty.”³² The problem, of course, is that this faction is not behaving like a “true wife” who finds freedom in chosen submission. The Antinomian party chooses to dissent in this world while insisting that choice is radically not possible when it comes to spiritual matters. Winthrop’s shift between characterizing authority by way of a parent–child relationship and a husband–wife relationship is symptomatic of issues of authority and choice roiling the Massachusetts Bay Colony during its early years. It is also symptomatic of the difficulties raised when women’s roles are used to illustrate spiritual and worldly relations at the same time.

³⁰ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 312.

³¹ Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, for instance, develops a sustained response to 1 Corinthians 14 in her *Respuesta à Sor Filotea* in which she cites the verses from Titus while also offering a historicist reading of the church at Corinth, and an appeal to reason that insists that girls are best taught by women. She also reads the verse as not referring literally to women but rather to incompetents. See Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *The Answer/La Respuesta*, trans. Electa Arenal and Amanda Powell (New York: Feminist Press, 1994), 80–87.

³² Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 312–313.

As the debate over the acceptability of women's public speech on religious matters drags on, Hutchinson snaps in apparent exasperation, "Do you think it not lawful for me to teach women and why do you call me to teach the court?" She highlights the disjunction between Winthrop's assertion of enforced authority and the assumption that the puritans in New England submit by choice both to God and to each other.³³ The irony Hutchinson stresses when asking, "Why do you call me to teach the court?" is clearly about unfair limits placed on women's public speech and abilities to reason, but Hutchinson may also be calling attention to the ironic spectacle that is being forced on her in the name of silencing her. Legal proceedings often focused on disciplining unruly women's bodies through a mix of shaming spectacle and admonitory argument that reinforced associations of women with bodies and men with reason and spirit. As with Fiske's argument about women's public conversion narratives, this public speech is framed as an act of submission, not power, though also like conversion narratives women's testimony did not always remain within that frame.

Hutchinson's body was rendered a spectacle in two well-known ways. During the ecclesiastical trial, she was accused of ideas that contributed to "that filthie Sinne of the Comunitie of Woemen and all promiscuus and filthie cominge together of men and Woemen without Distinction or Relation of Marriage,"³⁴ while in pamphlets that circulated outside the trial, much was made of her "monstrous birth." In his preface to Winthrop's *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines* (1644), Thomas Weld graphically describes mis-carriages by Hutchinson and her friend Mary Dyer:

God himselfe was pleased to step in with his casting voice, and bring in his owne vote and suffrage from heaven, by testifying his displeasure against their opinions and practises, as clearely as if he had pointed with his finger, in causing the two fomenting women in the time of the height of the Opinions to produce out of their wombs, as before they had out of their braines, such monstrous births as no Chronicle (I thinke) hardly ever recorded the like.³⁵

In contrast to figurative uses of feminine language to describe spiritual relationships with Christ, Weld asserts that Hutchinson's and Dyer's doctrinal heresies became literally manifest in their bodies as "monstrous

³³ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 315. Lisa Gordis argues that Hutchinson is "reluctant to relinquish a vision of interpretive community in which those who disagreed discussed their concerns and perplexities openly." Gordis, *Opening Scripture*, 181.

³⁴ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 372. ³⁵ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 214.

births." John Wheelwright sharply retorts in *Mercurius Americanus* (1645), "did the man obtestricate [*sic*]?", suggesting both poor and unseemly use of evidence.³⁶ Those participating in the public debate disagree about how Hutchinson's body should be interpreted, as Anne Jacobson Schutte has shown, but both sides use public debates about the significance of the "monstrous births" as a vehicle for their polemics and, as Bryce Traister has argued, in doing so call "attention to the gendering of male exegetical practices as much as they indicate the appearance of female heresy."³⁷ Masculinity and femininity alike are at play in the display and interpretation of female embodied spectacle insofar as these representations of monstrous births position women's bodies on the cusp between divine and worldly meaning – God's punishment emerges in this world through the body of "fomenting women" – while men arrogate to themselves the ability to interpret their significance.

More substantial debates about the status of the body and its significance with regard to earthly and divine covenants drive the later ecclesiastical trial, though the most sensational charges suggest embodied spectacle in a manner that resonates with the charge of "monstrous births." During Hutchinson's trial before the church in Boston, she is charged with holding "that foule, groce, filthye and abominable opinion held by Familists, *of the Communitie of Weomen*," a theological position that also resonates with polemical tendencies to charge women and dissenters with sexual deviance.³⁸ (The name "Antinomian" carries this sexual charge, as does Wheelwright's jibe about obstetrics.) The charge is a response to Hutchinson's assertion that "I doe not beleeeve that Christ Jesus is united to our Bodies," a version of what is called the mortalist heresy wherein the resurrection of the saved is understood to take place only in the Spirit or Christ and not in an individual body and soul.³⁹ This radical rejection of human ways of understanding the world is a logical extension of puritan beliefs with roots in older Christian thought, but the widely felt need to hold individuals accountable for worldly behavior in the hereafter had long rendered it heresy. John Davenport remonstrates, "if the Resurrection be

³⁶ John Wheelwright, *John Wheelwright: His Writings* (Boston: Prince Society, 1876), 196.

³⁷ Bryce Traister, "Anne Hutchinson's 'Monstrous Birth' and the Feminization of Antinomianism," *Canadian Revue of American Studies/Revue canadienne d'études américaines* 27.2 (1997): 144. Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Such Monstrous Births': A Neglected Aspect of the Antinomian Controversy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38.1 (1985): 85–106.

³⁸ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 362.

³⁹ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 362. See J. F. Maclear, "Anne Hutchinson and the Mortalist Heresy," *New England Quarterly* 54 (1981): 74–103.

past than Marriage is past: for it is a waytie Reason; *after the Resurrection is past, marriage is past. Than if thear be any Union betwene man and woman it is not by Marriage but in a Way of communitie.*"⁴⁰ Hutchinson rejects his conclusion, insisting that she does "abhor that Practise" though repeating, "*I scruple not the Resurrection but what Body shall rise, it shall rise, that is in Christ we shall rise.*"⁴¹ The charges of sexual license arise from both a theological argument and a worldly one. On the one hand, Hutchinson's judges contend that she believes in a form of resurrection apart from the death of the individual body that, if true, nullifies marriage (Matt. 22:30). Yet they also imply that beyond nullifying marriage contracts she may also be promoting sexual promiscuity since without final judgment of individuals after death, the living would be free to sin. Tellingly, this sexual profligacy is understood in terms of male enjoyment of multiple women. But while her judges require bodies to serve as evidence at the final judgement and women's bodies to be readable as evidence in this world (in contrast to the figurative treatment of the body found in puritan readings of Canticles), Hutchinson insists on both conscience and interpretive community in her civil trial and radical nonindividuality in her ecclesiastical trial in ways that consistently refuse to read bodies as signs. In her trial, marriage and body are joined, and again the largely figural treatment of marriage in puritan uses of Canticles gives way to a shifting between literal and figural that allows John Cotton in his formal admonition to say, "[T]hough I have not herd, nayther do I thinke, you have bine unfaythfull to your Husband in his Marriage Covenant, *yet that will follow upon it.*"⁴²

The Antinomian Controversy occurred during the first decade of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and prevailing theological debates about grace and the body, congregations wrestling with the significance of dissent from within, and the civic challenges of a new colony informed both the gender spectacle of the controversy and Hutchinson's considered participation in the ongoing debates. By the end of the seventeenth century, New England puritans faced different challenges including a decline in second- and third-generation colonists applying for church membership that led to vociferous debates about the Half-Way Covenant, Metacom's rebellion (King Philip's War), the Salem witchcraft trials, and changes in the perceptions and practice of puritanism in the wake of the restoration of Charles II. Tellingly, in his opening to *The Wonders of the Invisible World*,

⁴⁰ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 363.

⁴¹ Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 362–363.

⁴² Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 372.

his book on the Salem witch trials, Cotton Mather describes a decline from the first generation in terms of masculinity and sexual reproduction. "The first Planters of these Colonies were a *Chosen Generation* of men," while "the Children, and Servants of those Old Planters must needs afford many, *Degenerate Plants*."⁴³ One result of this sense of degeneracy was an intensification of the Jeremiad sermon tradition in print and public address that did the work of turning trauma and anxiety into blessings. For instance, Mather suggests that New England is being particularly beset both because "the *Devil* was Exceedingly disturbed, when he perceived such a people here accomplishing the Promise of old made unto our Blessed Jesus, *That He should have the Utmost parts of the Earth for his Possession*."⁴⁴ Witches, Indian attackers, criminals – all bore the message that God's chosen people were being tested. At the same time, women dominated church membership. In *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion*, Mather notes, "I have seen it without going a Mile from home, that in a Church of between three and four Hundred Communicants, there are but few more than one Hundred Men; all the rest are Women."⁴⁵ Women serve as significant examples of both sinfulness and imperiled innocence in many of the public responses to this sense of crisis in ways that again move to shore up patriarchal authority but also reflect the opportunities for agency that women experience within the puritan church. Again the play between figural and literal language, divine and civil law slips when women stand at the center even as women assert themselves in ways that are not merely submissive.

The Salem witchcraft trials are well known for their sexualized accounts of consorting with the devil and embodied displays of possession in the courtroom taken as testimony. And just as Weld, Winthrop, and Wheelwright debated readings of Hutchinson's and Dyer's bodies during the Antinomian Controversy, observers debated the use of evidence and the validity of confession. For Cotton Mather, the witchcraft crisis indicated that "*The Walls of the whole World are broken down!* The usual *Walls of Defence* about mankind have such a Gap made in them, that the very *Devils* are broke in upon us."⁴⁶ Just as the "monstrous births" made manifest heretical thinking, the evidence of witchcraft manifested in (mostly) women's bodies is figural insofar as it betokens degeneracy and

⁴³ Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (Boston, 1693), Readex, n.p.

⁴⁴ Mather, *Wonders*, n.p.

⁴⁵ Cotton Mather, *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion* (Cambridge, 1692), Readex, 44–45, quoted in William J. Scheick, *Authority and Female Authorship in Colonial America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 29.

⁴⁶ Mather, *Wonders*, 48.

serves as a sign of God's love, but it is also literally evidence that the "*Devils* are broke in upon us." We might look at debates about spectral evidence, as Sarah Rivett does, or differences in sympathetic appeal, as Abram Van Engen does, but either way, female figures are situated at the point of interpretation.⁴⁷ Their debate may have been waged over how to read embodied evidence, but the trial transcripts from Salem also make it clear that female participants exercise agency, critiquing the power of ministers and performing powerful interpretive discourse in their stead. As Sandra Gustafson puts it, "The possessed women and girls in Salem exposed the performative nature of the textual hierarchies that structured their society. When the possessed disrupted a sermon, their disturbances registered a broad but unspecified resistance to clerical authority."⁴⁸ Why their testimony and critique was to some degree officially validated is a hard question to answer, but it would seem that the crises that informed Mather's cry that "*The Walls of the whole World are broken down!*" yielded a surprising "collusion of female testimony and male judicial authority."⁴⁹

The Salem witchcraft trials, like the persecution of so-called witches around the world, targeted marginalized women who otherwise might not appear in the archive. Criminal accounts and execution sermons likewise often focused on nonelites, with many of those that were published and circulated in broadside and pamphlet form focusing on infanticide. As Laura Henigman observes, "however vigorously the legal machinery directs guilt at the single woman in question, it often preserves traces of alternative stories, and alternative theories of responsibility."⁵⁰ For instance, Patience Boston, a Pequod woman hanged for drowning her master's grandson, worries when she comes to recognize "that my Child had the same sinful Nature that I had." When told "I need not be distressed for my Child, either as to its Soul or Body; because it was disposed of into a Family where much Care would be taken for the Welfare of both," Boston refuses this noblesse oblige while insisting on a strict puritan position on the nature of Grace. She explains that "if Christ would give Grace to my Child it would have Grace, else no Means would avail any Thing." Acting as a mother and a Calvinist, Boston refuses condescending assurances that a foster family is

⁴⁷ See Rivett, *Science of the Soul*; and Abram C. Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans: Calvinist Fellow Feeling in Early New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁴⁸ Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power*, 42.

⁴⁹ Bryce Traister, *Female Piety and the Invention of American Puritanism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016), 170.

⁵⁰ Laura Henigman, *Coming into Communion: Pastoral Dialogues in Colonial New England* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 62.

best able to take care of her child while emphasizing her own understanding of grace.⁵¹ Boston and Hutchinson, like many of the New England women whose conversion narratives survive, do not testify as mothers or wives but rather assert themselves as mature spiritual agents, even within the ideologically constrained circumstances of trials and related polemics.

Anne Bradstreet

Here sits our grandame in retired place,
And in her lap her bloody Cain new-born;
The weeping imp oft looks her in the face,
Bewails his unknown hap and fate forlorn;
His mother sighs to think of Paradise,
And how she lost her bliss to be more wise,
Believing him that was, and is, father of lies.

—Anne Bradstreet, “Contemplations”⁵²

Anne Bradstreet’s first volume of poetry, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* (1650), reaches us coddled in authorizing prefatory texts by puritan men who flatter, indulge, and subtly admonish her by turns. While her brother-in-law, John Woodbridge, praises her “exact diligence in her place, and discrete managing of her family occasions,” Nathaniel Ward and others playfully allude to her efforts as threatening men’s hold on the poetic field.⁵³ Throughout her poetry she mounts pro-woman arguments in the tradition of the *querelle des femmes*, or debate about the “woman question.” In “The Prologue” she decries the illogic of men who refuse to acknowledge women’s achievements (“They’ll say it’s stol’n, or else it was by chance”), while in her elegy for Queen Elizabeth she uses a catalogue of female rulers to assert, “Let such as say our sex is void of reason, / Know ’tis a slander now but once was treason.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Patience Boston, *A Faithful Narrative of the Wicked Life and Remarkable Conversion of Patience Boston alias Samson* (Boston: Kneeland and Green, 1738), 28–29. I discuss this text further in Tamara Harvey, “Taken from her mouth: Narrative Authority and the Conversion of Patience Boston,” *Narrative* 6.3 (1998): 256–270.

⁵² Anne Bradstreet, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge: Belknap, 1967), 207–208.

⁵³ Bradstreet, *Works*, 3.

⁵⁴ Bradstreet, *Works*, 16, 198. Jane Donohue Eberwein argues that Bradstreet anticipates that readers among her immediate circle, including the men who offered prefatory material, would appreciate her pro-woman argument, demonstrating both that this debate tradition was well known and that ideas about gender were open to debate. Jane Donahue Eberwein, “No Rhet’ric We Expect’: Argumentation in Bradstreet’s ‘The Prologue,’” *Early American Literature* 16 (1981): 19–26.

"Of the Four Humours in Man's Constitution" is among the Bradstreet poems that fit within the *querelle des femmes*. In this poem, Bradstreet stages a debate among the humors that sets Choler, the most masculine humor, against Phlegm, the most feminine. Humoral medicine posited a balance among four humors that were associated with the four elements: choler/fire, sanguine or blood/air, melancholy or black bile/earth, and phlegm/water. Phlegm, I have argued elsewhere, puts forward the most sophisticated feminist argument of any of Bradstreet's speakers. All the humors are presented as sisters, just as the elements were in the preceding poem. Choler, the first and most masculine speaker, foregrounds gender and asserts her masculinity by explaining that she is taking on a female guise "for love we owe / Unto your sisterhood, which makes us render / Our noble selves in a less noble gender."⁵⁵ Phlegm gets the last word, and though she begins by appearing to defer to Choler's masculine superiority, she goes on to claim brain, eyes, and sexual functions as her own. Indeed, Bradstreet has Choler and Phlegm argue over who dominates the brain, with both Choler and Phlegm explicitly observing that they disagree over whether "heat" or "matter" is more essential. Phlegm concedes,

Shame forced thee say the matter that was mine,
But the spirits by which it acts are thine:
Thou speakest truth, and I can say no less,
Thy heat doth much, I candidly confess;
Yet without ostentation I may say,
I do as much for thee another way:⁵⁶

Choler's assertions about preeminence based on greater heat draws on Aristotelian formulations of the one-sex model, while Phlegm asserts functionalist ideas about the body that Bradstreet attributes to Helkiah Crooke. Though still falling within a "one-sex" model, this theory finds that all parts of the body are operative, so, for instance, the coldness of the brain is functional rather than a sign of lack. This functionalism allows Phlegm to oppose Choler's masculinist hierarchy with a characterization of female qualities as integral to the body that implies that women are likewise integral to the polity.

But Phlegm goes a step further when she explains that the brain is the seat of the soul, even as soul infuses everything. In doing so, she transforms spirit as heat, an Aristotelian concept embraced by Choler, into a more

⁵⁵ Bradstreet, *Works*, 34.

⁵⁶ Bradstreet, *Works*, 48.

Christian understanding of spirit that depends on phlegmatic, feminine matter:

That divine offspring the immortal soul
Though it in all and every part be whole,
Within this stately place of eminence,
Doth doubtless keep its mighty residence.
And surely, the soul sensitive here lives,
Which life and motion to each creature gives,
The conjugation of the parts to th' brain
Doth show, hence flow the powers which they retain.⁵⁷

Here Bradstreet draws on Helkiah Crooke's medical text, *Microcosmographia* (1615), when she has Phlegm claim the brain's matter as the seat of the soul. The senses, the eyes, the nerves, and, finally, the sexual functions all depend on this matter in ways that go beyond the animating heat of Choler, according to Phlegm. Tellingly, Phlegm refers to the latter only obliquely, citing Crooke, who can reveal what "modesty hath charged me to conceal."⁵⁸ (Crooke included a section on reproduction in *Microcosmographia* that was designed to be removable.)

Despite the cloaking of this knowledge, by acknowledging and claiming sexual function Phlegm subtly subverts the demand for silence, demonstrates knowledge, and retains her modesty. This reasoned and knowledgeable performance fits alongside those of other women who do not submit to or work around the dominating assertions of a masculine "I" in order to claim spiritual insight but rather draw on puritan epistemology to question that kind of self-assertion altogether.

Neither the conventions of the *querelle des femmes* nor the medical theory Phlegm cites are specifically puritan, though Phlegm's arguments about the soul are Christian, in contrast with Choler's Aristotelian theory of the body. "Contemplations," on the other hand, offers one of Bradstreet's most accomplished puritan poems. Written in the first person, it follows the "wandering feet" of a speaker whose contemplations occur during a walk in nature but also the poetic feet of Bradstreet as both speaker and poet try to make sense of creation and mortality. If the quaternion on the four humors is about gender but not necessarily puritan, "Contemplations" is clearly puritan but not necessarily about gender. The searching "I" is self-critical as a vehicle for weighing and rejecting different ways of understanding the relationship between human perception and

⁵⁷ Bradstreet, *Works*, 48.

⁵⁸ Bradstreet, *Works*, 49.

divine truth.⁵⁹ Elsewhere Bradstreet imagines Old England and New England as mother and daughter and spirit and flesh as female abstractions, but these are largely conventions. But in a portion of the poem dedicated to biblical history, Bradstreet includes a touching portrait of Eve holding “bloody Cain new-born” and sighing “to think of Paradise, / And how she lost her bliss to be more wise.” While Catholic women turned to the Virgin Mary for models of female identity and, in doing so, chose depictions that suited their needs, Calvinists frequently turned to Eve in order to distance themselves from Catholicism.⁶⁰ Here the meaning of bodies has a weight that clever Phlegm does not articulate but sorrowful Eve conveys. In addition to the Calvinist attachment to Eve, we can see in this an experience of childbirth and motherhood that registers beyond prescribed roles. This stanza treats sin and responsibility as well as sorrow. We might put this moment in “Contemplations” alongside Patience Boston’s ruminations on the state of her child’s soul or Mary Rowlandson’s vigil over her dead daughter or the unspoken loss and perhaps pain of Mary Dyer, whose “monstrous birth” catapulted as a watchword across the Atlantic. Silence and stillness in these cases may offer unspoken resistance to spectacle while demonstrating puritan awareness of sin and unearned grace in a female-bodied alternative to the Bride of Canticles.

Conclusion

What Love is this of thine, that Cannot bee
 In thine Infinity, O Lord, Confinde,
 Unless it in thy very Person see,
 Infinity, and Finitie Conjoyn’d?
 What hath thy Godhead, as not satisfied
 Marri’d our Manhood, making it its Bride?

—Edward Taylor, *Preparatory Meditations* (first series), 1⁶¹

If Edward Taylor and John Winthrop use the feminine figuratively to acknowledge and seek grace beyond their own worldly encumbrances and vanity, women often found themselves weighted down by their femaleness,

⁵⁹ Sarah Rivett reads this poem as critiquing both new philosophy and “the methods of natural philosophy as applied to human souls.” Rivett, *Science of the Soul*, 195.

⁶⁰ See Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 170–173; and Scheick, *Authority*, 33.

⁶¹ Taylor, *Poems*, 5.

unable to cast off assumptions that their female, maternal, sexual bodies were potentially portals for the demonic and divine alike but not necessarily the location of either reason or the transcendence of reason. Imbedded in these issues is a language problem that hinges on the relationship between literal and figural. Fallen human language posed problems for individual spiritual expression, while communal interpretive processes became strained by the sometime competing demands of congregationalism and civic order in New England. Gender is likewise both policed and shaped through language. In the relationship between literal and figural levels of interpretation, we see how dynamic puritan ideas about gender could be, but we also see that men and women had differing access to figurative language and different relationships to the literal, in large part because of the ways that figurative treatments of femininity and spectacular representations of both wayward and worthy women clashed with each other and with the experiences of female-bodied people.

CHAPTER 10

Race

Cassander L. Smith

In many respects, American puritan literature is the literature of contact. In poetry, sermons, spiritual diaries, and captivity and conversion narratives, among other generic forms, early puritans chronicled their interactions with black Africans and Natives in the Americas. They employed a number of terms to differentiate themselves from those they encountered. They noted the physical differences through descriptors like “tawny” and “black” and used words like “heathen” and “devil” to signal religious differences. They labeled black Africans and Natives as barbarians and savages. None of these terms was unique to puritans; their European predecessors had been employing the words to describe black Africans and Natives since Columbus’s first explorations – and in the case of black Africans, even earlier. Also like their predecessors, American puritans applied the terms inconsistently. In one context “tawny” could be a reference to someone of Native ancestry and in another context might refer to one who lived among Native communities or a black African. Racial markers had multiple valences and as a concept did not exactly coincide with what we understand as race today.¹ Our modern concept of race, as biological difference that is observable, inheritable, and hierarchical, has its roots in the late eighteenth century and the Enlightenment, which provided a pseudo-scientific approach to human categorization. Before then, European (-Americans) were more apt to order (and denigrate) humans based on cultural features related to dress, language,

¹ For more on the complexities of race in colonial America, see Sharon Block, *Colonial Complexions: Race and Bodies in Eighteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). It should be noted that race is no less murky and problematic in the twenty-first century, as evident, for example, in 2015 when the parents of Rachel Dolezal, a blue-eyed, blonde-haired woman who had been living as African American, *outed* her as white. For more on Dolezal and the public debate about race that ensued, see Julia Felsenthal, “How Do You Solve a Problem like Rachel Dolezal?,” *Vogue*, April 27, 2018, www.vogue.com/article/rachel-dolezal-netflix-documentary-the-rachel-divide-laura-brownson, accessed July 17, 2019.

geography and climate, and, especially for puritans, religion. Puritans, for example, often described friars and Jesuits in the same derogatory language – devilish, heathen, barbarous – as Natives and black Africans.² The representation of race in American puritan literature is, in a word, complicated.

Despite its messiness, race provides a fruitful lens through which to examine American puritan literature because it makes more visible the multicultural encounters that energized that literature. Those encounters, in fact, complicated puritan efforts to represent race. This chapter, then, focuses on what representations of race can tell us about puritan interactions, particularly with Natives and black Africans. Because puritan thinking about human difference largely reflected practices already in effect in Europe, the first half of the chapter presents a general overview of those racial ideologies that traveled with puritans into the Americas. The second half of the chapter presents a critical approach to the study of race and puritan culture that emphasizes race as an experiential phenomenon, which moves us beyond traditional approaches that examine race as discourse and theory. An experiential approach allows the reader to interrogate more closely puritans' engagements with their cultural counterparts and emphasizes the consequences of those engagements in forming the literature.

In light of the work that has been done by historians of race and literary scholars, we can make four general observations about how Europeans understood human difference in the Americas amid puritan immigration to the region. These generalizations are starting points, as exceptions apply in every instance. The first observation bears repeating from this chapter's introduction. Race was not a systematic, stable mechanism for ordering social relations in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This is not to say that race did not operate among those first generations of puritans. The point is that we should attend to the nuances of usage when encountering racialized language in the texts. For example, in Mary Rowlandson's 1682 captivity narrative *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*,

² As Heather Miyano Kopelson notes in her study of corporeality and the function of religion in racializing populations in Atlantic Puritan cultures, "Interpretations of the body of Christ among religious thinkers in seventeenth-century Europe and the Puritan Atlantic reveal how people thought about community in a way that intrinsically involved religion as well as cultural readings of the body." See Kopelson, *Faithful Bodies: Performing Religion and Race in the Puritan Atlantic* (New York: New York University Press, 2014). See also E. Shaskan Bumas, "The Cannibal Butcher Shop: Protestant Uses of las Casas's Brevisima relacion in Europe and the American Colonies," *Early American Literature* 35.2 (2000): 107–136.

she describes as “creatures” the Narragansett-led forces that held her and her children hostage for some two months. It is tempting to take for granted that the diction, the use of the word “creatures,” dehumanizes the Narragansett by portraying them in monstrous terms. However, Rowlandson, the wife of a puritan minister in Lancaster, Massachusetts, employs the term sometimes in reference to herself as well as to figures in the Bible. In trying to make sense of her ordeal, for instance, at one point Rowlandson laments, “I saw how in my walk with God, I had been a careless creature.”³ In her seventeenth-century puritan context, “creature” is a neutral noun that describes humans and other animals “created” by God. Rowlandson’s specific usage of the term becomes derogatory only when she qualifies it. The Narragansett are not simply creatures but, specifically, barbarous creatures, black creatures, and brute creatures. The additional markers differentiate the Natives from Rowlandson and her fellow puritan creatures and also strip away the particularity of Native communities by normalizing the behaviors of a few as representative of all Natives.⁴

Second, we can observe that somatic features mattered but not in the way those features matter for us today. Natives early on were referred to as olive, tawny, and brown, which perplexed Europeans who expected that based on geographical latitude Natives should more properly reflect the dark color of black Africans. Conceding flaws in the theory, the English scientist and translator Richard Eden mused in 1555:

This is also to bee considered as a secreate worke of nature, that through-out all Afryke under the Equinoctiall line and neare about the same on bothe sydes, the regions are extreme hotte and the people very blacke. Whereas contrarily such regions of the West Indies as are under the same line, are very temperate and the people neyther blacke nor with curld and

³ Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, ed. Neal Salisbury (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 91.

⁴ For more on normalizing discourse and the racial tenor of colonial discursive practices, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500–1676* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); and Dana Nelson, *The Word in Black and White: Reading “Race” in American Literature, 1638–1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). For more on how Puritans understood humans and other animals as situated within the same spiritual cosmology, see Robert N. Watson, “Protestant Animals: Puritan Sects and English Animal-Protection Sentiment, 1550–1650,” *ELH* 81.4 (Winter 2014): 1111–1148. See also Virginia DeJohn Anderson, “The Deer with the Red Collar: English Ideas about Animals,” in *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 43–74.

short woole on they heads as have they of Afryke but of the coloure of an olive with longe and blacke heare on they heads.⁵

One way Europeans reconciled their cognitive dissonance was by determining that Natives were members of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and therefore not a distinctly different category of human. Yet other Europeans, as Joyce Chaplin has noted, saw a marked difference in the corporeal features of Natives in terms of health and their susceptibility to diseases, which suggested racial difference.⁶ This is to say, there were conflicting perspectives about Natives as a racial group. Were they essentially primitive Europeans, as Thomas Harriot had suggested after his encounters with Algonquian in North Carolina in 1585, in which case their cultural difference was a matter of nurture rather than nature?⁷ Or was that cultural difference a natural phenomenon and therefore irredeemable? The effort of New England puritans to annihilate members of the Pequot nation – through brutal war tactics, banishment, and enslavement during the Pequot War in 1637 reflects the thinking that Natives were a different race, irredeemable and threatening to settler colonialists. In opposition, puritan missionary efforts, beginning in the 1640s and led by the vigor of John Eliot, reflect the opposite thinking, especially given Eliot's efforts to establish Praying Towns where newly converted Natives could live and worship. Not incidentally, those Praying Towns adopted laws governing dress and behavior designed to remake Natives culturally in the image of their Euro-American neighbors.⁸

A third observation is that there was less debate about the racial difference of black Africans, though there was some uncertainty about the nature of that difference. Since antiquity, the dark skin color of sub-Saharan Africans struck Europeans as anomalous, but they did not

⁵ See Eden, *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India* (1555), in *The First Three English Books on America*, ed. Edward Arber (Westminster: A. Constable and Co., 1895), 387–388.

⁶ Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 27.

⁷ Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1972).

⁸ For specifics about the racial dimensions of the Pequot war and its outcome, see G. E. Thomas, "Puritans, Indians, and the Concept of Race," *The New England Quarterly* 48.1 (March 1975): 3–27; and Alden Vaughan, "Pequots and Puritans: The Causes of the War of 1637," in *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 177–199. For more on the origins theory about Natives, see Richard W. Cogley, "The Ancestry of the American Indians: Thomas Thorowgood's 'Jewes in America' (1650) and 'Jews in America' (1660)," *English Literary Renaissance* 35.2 (Spring 2005): 304–330; and Kristina Bross, "Seeing with Ezekiel's Eyes: Indian Resurrection in Transatlantic Colonial Writings," in *Dry Bones: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 28–51. For more on the assimilationists aims of praying towns, see Jean M. O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

necessarily attach negative values to that anomaly. Classical thinkers, among them Herodotus and Pliny the Elder, developed a number of theories for why the skin of black Africans was so deeply pigmented: proximity to the sun, an imbalance in bodily fluids, biblical curses passed down through the descendants of Cain and Noah's son Ham.⁹ The curse of Ham became a commonplace rationale for the enslavement and dehumanization to which black Africans were subjected in the Americas. This racial theory derives from a story in the Book of Genesis about how Noah punishes his younger son Ham, deemed impudent, by marking one of Ham's sons, named Canaan, with dark skin and dooming Canaan (and all his offspring) to perpetual servitude. In the first published debate about slavery in colonial New England in 1700–1701, Samuel Sewall and John Saffin both reference the Hamitic curse. Condemning slavery in his pamphlet "The Selling of Joseph, a Memorial," Sewall argues that the idea that black Africans labor in Massachusetts under a biblical curse is based on a misreading of the moment in Genesis 9:25–27. In pointing out that the curse applied to Canaan, he argues that "the Blackmores are not descended of Canaan, but of [Ham's other son] Cush."¹⁰ What is more, even if black Africans are the descendants of a cursed Ham, Sewall quips, "How do we know but that [the curse] is long since out of date?"¹¹ Saffin largely concedes Sewall's point about the curse in his own pamphlet titled "A Brief and Candid Answer to a Late Printed Sheet Entitled the Selling of Joseph." Whether they were cursed or not, "we shall not dispute," he says, but "this may suffice . . . any lawful Captives of other Heathen Nations may be made Bond men."¹² He cites biblical precedence as justification.

For Sewall, the practice of slavery undermines the spiritual order of things, an order that determines that black Africans and their white

⁹ For more on these theories, see Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); David Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); and David Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial* (1700), 2. http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libdata.lib.ua.edu/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EAI&p_theme=eai&p_nbid=X4FC4CGJMTQ4NjMxMzEoNi43MTQ1MDA6MT0xND0xMzAuMTYwLjJlLjExNw&p_action=doc&p_queryname=1&p_docref=v2:oFzB1FCB879Bo99B@EAIx-oF3o13EF2FA328Fo@951-oFAD97D293A82290@1/

¹¹ Sewall, *Selling of Joseph*.

¹² John Saffin, "A Brief and Candid Answer to a Late Printed Sheet Entitled the Selling of Joseph" (Boston, 1701), in *Notes on the History of Slavery in Massachusetts*, ed. George Moore (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1866), 251–256 (254).

colonial counterparts share a common origin as “the Sons of Adam.”¹³ Sewall insists they all inherit God’s kingdom, rendering racial difference a moot point. Again here, Saffin agrees with Sewall that black Africans fit within a spiritual order. “We grant it for a certain and undeniable verity,” he writes, that all men are “the creatures of God.”¹⁴ This, however, does not mean that “we ought to tender Pagan Negroes with all love, kindness, and equal respect as to the best of men,” Saffin argues.¹⁵ Racial difference, then, implied here through religious difference, matters for Saffin because it ensures a civil order that is hierarchical and that permits slavery. “It would be a violation of common prudence,” he insists, “and a breach of good manners, to treat a Prince like a Peasant” and vice versa.¹⁶ For Saffin, slavery does not upset the spiritual order but protects it as Christians assume their rule over non-Christians.¹⁷

In grappling with the nature of black African difference and the morality of slavery, Sewall and Saffin articulate the stakes in terms of spiritual and civil order, which anticipates the fourth and final observation. Throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the corporeal body was central in how puritans understood both their relationship to God through Christ and their relationship to each other. That is to say, they endeavored to be members of the body of Christ and, by extension, of a civil body politic. Discourses about human difference challenged their thinking about the link between these two bodies and the maintenance of social order. The issue was one of inclusion. Race operates as forms of oppression and exclusivity. Central to puritan theology, however, as discussed above with Sewall and Saffin, is the idea that all humans are the offspring of Adam and Eve. Puritans arrived in the Americas, then, with a competing set of impulses. On the one hand, they sought to convert Natives (and eventually black Africans). In fact, conversion was built into the Charter of Massachusetts Bay in 1629. On the other hand, as Zubeda Jalalzai points out, theirs was a spiritual mission, and they sought to “remain pure as a political and religious body.”¹⁸ Conversion seemed to demand the inclusion of racialized others; race (and its concomitant ideas about defilement

¹³ Sewall, *Selling of Joseph*, 1. ¹⁴ Saffin, “A Brief and Candid Answer,” 255.

¹⁵ Saffin, “A Brief and Candid Answer,” 256. ¹⁶ Saffin, “A Brief and Candid Answer,” 255.

¹⁷ Saffin, “A Brief and Candid Answer,” 256. For a detailed discussion about how early Puritans, like Saffin, reconciled economic and religious imperatives to justify black African enslavement, see Elisabeth Ceppi, *Invisible Masters: Gender, Race, and the Economy of Service in Early New England* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth University Press, 2018); and Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016).

¹⁸ See Jalalzai, “Race and the Puritan Body Politic,” *MELUS* 29 (Fall/Winter 2004): 259–272 (261).

and corruption) demanded the exclusion of those others. This contradiction manifests in the literature at times as a kind of racial ambivalence. Sewall, for example, for all his ardor in advocating for the humane treatment of black Africans, still worries that they are an “extravasat blood,” lurking in “our body politick” on account of a “disparity in their conditions, color & hair.” He declares that “they can never embody with us, and grow up into orderly families, to the peopling of the land.”¹⁹ Sewall can acknowledge black Africans within a spiritual cosmology; however, because of his racialized thinking, he cannot imagine them as part of the civil body.

The prominent puritan minister Cotton Mather adopts a similar posture in his 1706 essay “Negro Christianized.” In the essay, he implores his fellow puritan slaveholders to convert their black slaves, arguing that it is morally just as “thy Negro is thy neighbour.”²⁰ Echoing Sewall, he reminds his readers that “God hath made of one Blood, all nations of men,” which means, then, that the enslaved black man “is thy brother too.”²¹ He acknowledges a spiritual kinship but also, as a nod to slaveholders, maintains that the enslavement of black Africans does not disrupt God’s design. He argues that there are “*bond* as well as *Free*, among those that have been *Renewed in the Knowledge and Image of Jesus Christ*.”²² It is not a contradiction, then, to have a baptized slave. Mather is well aware of the racial attitudes that, to his mind, have impeded the “Christianizing” of enslaved blacks, attitudes that black Africans lacked souls or the intelligence to receive catechism. He challenges those attitudes, ironically, by positioning black Africans within the same racial discourse as Natives. That is to say, he suggests that they exist in a “barbarous” state akin to that of Britons, who lived in England leading up to the time of Christ and were, in Mather’s words, “in many things as *Barbarous* . . . as the *Negroes* are at this [day].”²³ Just as it was said that the Romans brought civilization to the Britons, Mather argues that “Christianity will be the best cure for [the] barbarity” of black Africans.²⁴ To further help his readers imagine black Africans within the spiritual body, he hypothesizes that their dark color is a pathology for which salvation is a treatment: “Let us make a Trial, Whether they that have been Scorched and Blacken’d by the Sun of *Africa*,

¹⁹ Sewall, *Selling of Joseph*, 2.

²⁰ Mather, *The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist the Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (Boston: Printed by B. Green, 1706), 5, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/No1059.0001.001>.

²¹ Mather, *The Negro Christianized*, 6.

²² Mather, *The Negro Christianized*, 26–27.

²³ Mather, *The Negro Christianized*, 23.

²⁴ Mather, *The Negro Christianized*, 24.

may not come to have their Minds Healed by the more Benign *Beams* of the *Sun of Righteousness*.²⁵ Later in the essay, he returns to this issue of the black African's darkened complexion, noting:

Complexion sometimes is made an Argument, why nothing should be done [to convert black Africans slaves]. *Gay* sort of argument! As if the great God went by the *Complexion* of Men, in His Favours to them! As if none but *Whites* might hope to be Favoured and Accepted with God! Whereas it is well known, That the *Whites*, are the least part of Mankind. The biggest part of Mankind, perhaps, are *Copper-Coloured*; a sort of *Tawnies*. And our *English* that inhabit some *Climates*, so seem growing apace to be not so much unlike unto them. As if, because a people, from the long force of the African *Sun & Soyl* upon them, (improved perhaps, to further Degrees by maternal imaginations, and other accidents,) are come at length to have the small *Fibres* of their *Veins*, and the Blood in them, a little more Interspersed thro' their Skin than other People, this must render them less valuable to Heaven than the rest of Mankind? Away with such Trifles! The God who *looks on the Heart*, is not moved by the colour of the *Skin*; is not more propitious to one *Colour* than another.²⁶

Mather condemns color prejudice, deeming the variety in human skin tones a meaningless marker. However, Mather's seemingly enlightened musings about human difference – or the lack thereof – does not promise a change in the earthly, material conditions for black Africans (or Natives, for that matter). In keeping with puritan theology, Mather understands social order in terms of masters and servants. He aims to check the tyrannical impulses of his neighbors not by challenging their earthly right to be masters but by urging them to be *good* masters.²⁷

For a number of decades, scholars have attended to race as a theory and discourse in the early Americas, producing studies centered on what puritans meant when they employed racialized language and how they meant it. In these conversations, Natives and black Africans are what Toni Morrison calls, in reference to later iterations of American literature, products of a white literary imagination.²⁸ The writers themselves are rendered unreliable narrators who invariably obscure our access to the

²⁵ Mather, *The Negro Christianized*, 2–3.

²⁶ Mather, *The Negro Christianized*, 24.

²⁷ This is an extension of Mather's 1696 conduct manual "A Good Master Well Served" (Boston: Printed by B. Green and J. Allen, 1696), <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/N00618.0001.001>, in which he presses his fellow Christians to use their slaves according to a law of *Charity*, reminiscent of John Winthrop's famous sermonic exhortation "A Modell of Christian Charity," delivered in 1629. For more on the master–servant dynamic among the Puritans, see Ceppi, *Invisible Masters*, ch. 4.

²⁸ See Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

historical agents on whom the racialized representations are based. Race is treated as metaphor, and the mediated presences of Natives and black Africans in the texts, like Rowlandson's Narragansett captors, become conduits through which we glean information about the writers crafting the texts. That is to say that when we read about the Narragansett, we do not see the historical people who populated Massachusetts in the seventeenth century; we see an image of those people filtered through the ethnocentric lens of Rowlandson. These studies have done the important work of illuminating the centrality of racial thinking in the invasive colonization of the Americas and the formation of new cultural landscapes. However, when we approach representations of race in the literature as the product of writerly privilege, our readings tend to overdetermine the writer's agency and undermine the collaborative energies that typically define the writing process. Whatever Rowlandson ultimately puts on the page, guided by editorial apparatuses, her representations of Natives have been informed, at least in part, by her interactions with them in the material world outside the text.²⁹ Those representations can tell us something, then, not just about white, puritan writers but also about the black African and Native figures those writers represent. Black Africans and Natives were not passive constructions but agentive forces helping to shape puritan (and early American) culture.³⁰

As an extended illustration, consider the following conversion narrative of a black African woman living in New England in 1643:

There is also a Blackmore maid, that hath long lived at *Dorchester* in *New-England*, unto whom God hath so blessed the publique and private means of Grace, that she is not only indued with a competent measure of knowledge in the mysteries of God, and conviction of her miserable estate by sinne; but hath also experience of the saving work of grace in her heart, and a sweet savour of Christ breathing in her; insomuch that her soule hath longed to enjoy Church fellowship with the Saints there, and having propounded her desire to the Elders of the Church after some triall of her taken in private, she was called before the whole Church, and there did make confession of her knowledge in the Mysteries of Christ and of the work of Conversion upon her Soule: And after that there was such a testimony given of her blamelesse and godly Conversation, that she was admitted a member by the joynt consent of the Church, with great joy to all

²⁹ For a concise survey of literary studies that discuss race as metaphor, see the introduction of my book *Black Africans in the British Imagination: English Narratives of the Early Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016), 1–28.

³⁰ For more on agency and representation, see my book *Black Africans in the British Imagination*.

their hearts. Since which time, we have heard her much admiring Gods free grace to such a poore wretch as she was; that God leaving all her friends and Kindred still in their sinnes, should cast an eye upon her, to make her a member of Christ, and of his Church also: and hath with teares exhorted some other of the *Indians* that live with us to embrace *Iefus Chrijl*, declaring how willing he would be to receive them, even as he had received her.³¹

The passage comes from an anonymously written pamphlet titled “New England’s First Fruits,” published in London in 1643. The pamphlet presents a series of fifteen to twenty short narratives recounting the conversion experiences of mostly Algonquian living in or interacting with the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The text also details the progress of a fledgling Harvard College. The pamphlet was designed to raise money for further mission efforts in the colony and to support the development of Harvard. The text is one of the colony’s earliest efforts to prove that it was indeed converting the region’s native populations, which was the “principal ende” of the colony’s charter. Over the next thirty years or so, colonial missionaries published ten more such pamphlets, all highlighting the conversion experiences of Natives in Massachusetts. Commonly called the “Eliot Tracts,” because more than half of them were written by puritan missionary John Eliot, the pamphlets have become rich source material for scholars of early American studies interrogating puritan attitudes toward Natives and for those debating what we can or cannot know about the experiences of Natives based on the mediated narratives.

The above passage is remarkable if for no other reason than it turns our attention to the conversion experience of a black woman, an extraneous element, given that the colony’s charter emphasizes the conversion of Natives, not black Africans. The account also is noteworthy for its atypical representation of a black woman in colonial America, evident by the fact that she appears at all in the text, and she appears beyond the context of transatlantic slavery. The passage does not tell us whether she was enslaved, indentured, or free; her relationship to this market economy was irrelevant in the present context. She offers a perspective of black women’s experiences in the era that counters that of those black women – Candy and Mary Black – accused of witchcraft during the Salem Witch Trials in 1692. The women were especially vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft

³¹ “New England’s First Fruits,” in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, ed. Michael P. Clark (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 55–78 (61).

because of their enslaved status and, in the case of Candy, her transatlantic identity (she had arrived in Massachusetts by way of Barbados).³²

The “Blackmore” maid’s experience also contrasts that of another black woman, enslaved and living in Massachusetts at the same time, who was raped by a fellow slave at the behest of a slave owner, who ordered the violent act to ensure the woman’s impregnation. Distraught and traumatized, the woman tearfully complained about the incident to a passerby in 1638. Her grief so moved that passerby, an Englishman named John Josselyn, that he related her story in the travel journal he published in 1674.³³ The woman’s story of having been raped can tell us a great deal, as historian Wendy Warren has pointed out, about the plight of enslaved black women in colonial Massachusetts.³⁴ The “Blackmore” maid’s story, by contrast, offers insight about how black women might have fared beyond enslavement.

Despite its anomalous quality, the passage fits the pamphlet’s larger rhetorical purpose. This is evident in the final lines of the passage as the writer explains that the woman, who has been so thoroughly converted that she then becomes a model for Natives, is proof that God would “receive [Natives], *even* as he had received her” (emphasis mine). That adverb *even* is not neutral but loaded with presumption; this woman represents the possibility of the impossible. Missionaries touch *even* the hearts and minds of black Africans, long thought unreachable by some. Her successful conversion proves the feasibility of converting Natives, not nearly as unreachable. In short, the woman’s narrative mediates claims about the efficacy of Massachusetts Bay Colony’s missionary efforts.³⁵

The woman’s narrative, in many regards, is conventional. In the summaries and transcriptions of Native converts, the converts typically catalog

³² For more on Candy, see my essay “‘Candy No Witch in Her Country’: What One Enslaved Woman’s Testimony during the Salem Witch Trials Can Tell Us about Early American Literature,” in *Early Modern Black Diaspora Studies: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Cassander L. Smith, Nicholas Jones, and Miles Grier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 107–135.

³³ See Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England: Made during the Years 1638, 1663* (1674), <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/Sabin?af=RN&ae=CY103135201&srchtp=a&ste=14/>, accessed November 11, 2016.

³⁴ For more on the historical significance of this enslaved woman, see Warren, “The Cause of Her Grief: The Rape of a Slave in Early New England,” *The Journal of American History* 93.4 (2007): 1031–1049.

³⁵ As another perspective, Kathryn N. Gray argues that the woman’s representation reflects a stereotypically maternal energy through which Eliot mostly understood the value of Native women converts. See Gray, “Christian Indian Women in Seventeenth-Century New England,” in *John Eliot and the Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay: Communities and Connections in Puritan New England* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 89–120 (93).

their sins, insist that the wrath of God has led them to prayer, exhibit sincerity of belief and knowledge of doctrine, and beg pardon while seeking salvation and admission to the church. Converts usually present their conversion narratives before a group of church elders and, in the case of Natives, speak in their own languages, which are then translated by missionaries into English. The church elders decide whether a convert's conversion is sincere and worthy of admission to the church. Conversion, then, is a (quasi-)public, performative act. The summary of the "Blackmore" maid's conversion suggests she underwent this process. Much of the diction in the passage renders her in typical puritan rhetoric – referencing her *miserable state* prior to conversion and the *teares* with which she *exhorts* Natives to come to Christ. She was formerly a *poore wretch* but since is *blessed with the publique and private means of Grace*. In this way, the woman's narrative reflects her inclusion. However, race still operates in the passage as a system of differentiation. The descriptive marker *Blackmore* and the emphasis on the ardor of her conversion signal her alterity. That alterity helps the writer of "New England's First Fruits" to delineate what is possible in terms of evangelizing to Natives.³⁶

Besides the observation that the woman operates as a racialized metaphor, we can push the analysis further by interrogating what this black woman might have done in the material world beyond the narrative to produce a textual representation. Granted, there is not much we can know about the historical details of the woman's life. In that way, the passage reflects the kind of archival void about which Saidiya Hartman ruminates.³⁷ The woman is nameless. The passage offers no specific details about her family, occupation, or circumstances of birth. There is no direct speech; the woman does not write her own narrative. A particularly cynical reading of the passage could even lead one to ask whether the writer fabricated the narrative; is there a material correlation to the textual moment at all? Let us, however, read perceptively, not cynically. That is to say, despite the fact we cannot know with certainty who this woman was, we can still perceive the effect of her material presence on the

³⁶ For an introduction to the Puritan process of conversion, see Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963); and Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For a concise discussion of the performative nature of Native conversion narratives, see Joshua Bellin, "John Eliot's Playing Indian," *Early American Literature* 42.1 (2007): 1–30.

³⁷ See Hartman's essay "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe*, number 26, 12.2 (June 2008): 1–14, and her more extended discussion in *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

narrative, the same way we might perceive the recent departure of a person from a room based on the lingering scent of a perfume or an echoing noise. It is a kind of circumstantial speculation.

The woman's material presence resonates in the conversion narrative, in the moment, for example, when the writer tells us that the woman persisted in her efforts to join the church: *her soule hath longed to enjoy Church fellowship with the Saints there*. So, *she* went to the church elders seeking admission, an illustration of human agency – and an agenda. If we consider the passage from her perspective, a counternarrative emerges, one characterized by movements of exclusion and inclusion. At the beginning of the passage, the writer situates the woman into a township, which implies she belonged to a community, but he also articulates her identity in terms of her racial and gendered difference, denoting her exclusion. Those differences, coupled with the fact that she was not a member of the local church, suggests that she “long lived” on the margins of that township, a silent, invisible body. Once she joins the church, she gains a voice. As the writer makes clear, she could be *heard much admiring Gods free grace to such a poore wretch as she was*. She uses that voice to proselytize Natives. By the end of the narrative, she is no longer merely a racial outsider; she has transformed into an authoritative figure, a missionary herself. As such, she participates in a transatlantic discourse designed to justify Massachusetts's American experiment.

While the woman's story is an illustration of how English mission efforts have reached what they perceived as the most heathen, depraved populations, it is also a narrative about cultural integration and transformation. It is a narrative about interracial contact, reflecting what Joshua Bellin notes as a general feature of the colony's missionary efforts, which were “rooted in intercultural contexts of translation, mediation, and exchange.”³⁸ Circumstantial evidence – the way she sought an audience with church elders, the way she transforms into a missionary – suggests that the woman recognized the social currency that came with church membership. Once she gained that admission, she did something, said something as a new convert that was so compelling that the writer was moved to include her story – in a pamphlet about the conversions of Natives and the founding of Harvard College. That counternarrative, however speculative, reminds us of the collaborative nature of writing. The “Blackmore” maid's conversion story is not solely the product of a writer's rhetorical schema but also a result of the woman's own

³⁸ Bellin, “John Eliot's Playing Indian,” 2.

machinations. Puritan literature by and large reflects an ethnocentric world view that was grounded in European racial ideologies. Reading race in the literature requires that we reorient ourselves to the texts, reading from the perspectives of the writers but also reading from the perspectives of those racialized figures represented in the texts. Those representations correlate with material world referents and suggest a great deal about the multicultural contacts that shaped puritan literature.

CHAPTER I I

Print Culture

Jonathan Beecher Field

In 2009, I published a book that asserted that “scholars of this period need to rethink the work of colonial literature in the Atlantic world,” in a monograph that I claimed used “the insights of scholars of American and English print culture to consider how print worked in the seventeenth-century Atlantic world.”¹ I discussed at length the “work” that Roger Williams’s *A Key into the Language of America* performs. A decade later, this kind of focus on print as the way that work (political, ideological, cultural, and so forth) gets done warrants reconsideration. There is plenty of work left to do for scholars of American puritan print culture, but there is also work to do thinking about what the category of print includes and excludes and what other ways of conceiving communication technologies might lead to more generative and generous ways of imagining non-oral communication in seventeenth-century New England, especially literacies by and for those who are not educated white men.

As such, this revised account is influenced by a line of thought from what Lara Cohen refers to as Trish Loughran’s “bummer school” of American literature. Cohen, along with Jordan Stein, pushes back against the idea of “cultural work” as something books can do automatically and without friction. Stein, in his *When Novels Were Books* (2020), speaks of “the bummer theory of print culture – the use of archival and empirical evidence to challenge the theoretical assumption that ‘cultural work always works,’ as Lara Cohen puts it.”²

The bummer school of print culture scholarship stands as a response to an earlier generation of print culture scholarship that was less concerned with the impact that the vagaries of embodiment and geography might

¹ Jonathan Beecher Field, *Errands into the Metropolis: New England Dissidents in Revolutionary London* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth/University Press of New England, 2009), 12, 32, 26–47.

² Lara Langer Cohen, *The Fabrication of American Literature: Fraudulence and Antebellum Print Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 4, 244. Jordan Stein, *When Novels Were Books*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2020), 19.

have on the work print might do. Michael Warner's *Letters of the Republic* stands as one of the foundational examples of this earlier generation of scholarship. Using the insights of the then recently translated *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Warner argues that reading and writing were intrinsic to citizenship in a new republic. As he comments, "print discourse made it possible to imagine a people who could act as a people and in distinction from the state."³ Warner's argument is compelling and remains influential, but it does leave space for accounts of print culture that confront the messy and erratic vagaries of actually distributing print. Loughran's work is a germinal example of scholarship that revises Warner's model by suggesting some of the ways that this grand synthesis of people into a nation was complicated by the material conditions attending the act of disseminating any text. Loughran details the travails of one Hugh Findlay, a "forgotten Enlightenment functionary" charged in 1772 with inspecting the King's Post Road along the east coast of the American colonies. What he finds are a host of physical and material barriers to the smooth passage of mail, including drunken riders, illegal private postal networks, and postmasters who set mail in type for local gazettes.⁴

This distinction between the heroic and bummer schools of print culture studies is especially important to make in the context of American puritan literature, as this is a body of writing that ensued, broadly speaking, from the Protestant Reformation. As it happens, the Protestant Reformation is one of the changes that Elizabeth Eisenstein identifies in her influential but controversial study *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Loughran, Cohen, Stein, and others remind us that if we wish to join with scholars like Jane Tomkins who speak of the "cultural work" books do, it is important to clarify where, when, how, and for whom this work does or does not successfully work. With this approach in mind, this essay will consider situations where print works, sort of, or not, with particular attention to where it works, how it works, when it works, and especially for whom it works.

Colonial American puritan print culture is a print culture of the Atlantic. Print emerged as a technology in the company of the advances in shipbuilding and navigation that made the European settlement of

³ Michael Warner, *Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), xiii.

⁴ Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 6, 7.

North America possible, and the relative state of these technologies had a distinct impact on the culture of the word in New England. To begin, it is critical to remember that New England authors and audiences were separated from printing technology by an ocean that is big, wet, and stormy. There was a press in New England after 1639, but not all New Englanders had access to this press, and many New Englanders preferred to publish for larger audiences in London. For New England authors concerned with reaching their brethren at home, transmitting their text in some form from the new world to the old was an essential step in becoming an author. An aspiring author could journey back to England with a text, either in manuscript or in mind, or they could dispatch someone else with the manuscript and trust them to deliver it to an appropriate printer in London. None of these options was particularly appealing. Manuscripts could and did miscarry in the hands of friends, while traveling personally meant a long and risky voyage and absence from family and work in New England. Particularly for the clergy, who published such a large proportion of seventeenth-century New England literature, abandoning a parish for an uncertain number of months was an untenable option.

For all of these liabilities, the separation of presses from authors and readers offered some unusual opportunities to enterprising authors. An author who appeared in London with a story of events in New England generally found a ready audience and – critically – readers unlikely to have ready access to contradicting or corroborating narratives. For dissidents, especially, this opportunity allowed them to escape the stifling hegemony of the New England ministers and magistrates and present a minority report with the potential to gain traction for months if not years before a rejoinder came from one of the Bay Colony's representatives. Thus, a radical firebrand such as Samuel Gorton could present himself as England's preferred emissary to Indigenous inhabitants of New England in *Simplicities Defence against Seven-Headed Policy* and have this account get some credence in the interval before the Bay Colony dispatched Edward Winslow to publish his rejoinder, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*.⁵

For scholars of seventeenth-century English print culture, where authors volley remonstrances, animadversions, and rejoinders back and forth with a speed that is not much slower than a contentious Twitter thread today, the stately pace of New England print arguments mediated through London presses is like watching someone play chess by mail. In 1644,

⁵ Field, *Errands into the Metropolis*, 56.

Roger Williams published *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience Discussed*, his attack on New England puritan clergy's efforts to coerce matters of conscience. In 1647, the target of these criticisms, John Cotton, fired back with *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, Washed White in the Bloud of the Lamb*. At his next opportunity, in 1652, Roger Williams responded with *The Bloody Tenent yet More Bloody: By Mr Cottons Endeavour to Wash It White in the Blood of the Lambe*.⁶ One imagines that John Cotton would not have taken this rejoinder lying down, but he died before he had the chance to respond. As arguments go, it is a slow moving one.⁶

There would be no print culture without authors, and the peculiar contours of authorship in puritan New England warrant some consideration. To put it mildly, authorship was a privilege that was very unevenly distributed. New England was inhabited by Native, settler, and African men and women. With very few exceptions, the authors of the stories that survive are white men. It may sound perverse, but an essential aspect of understanding seventeenth-century New England print culture is understanding what does not get printed. There is a grotesque gender imbalance in terms of whose words find their way into print, and even those rare instances of female authorship are intensely mediated by men. More strikingly, we do not have a contemporary printed account of either the Pequot or King Philip's War from any of the Natives who fought, suffered, or witnessed these wars. Indeed, even the names that generations of historians call these wars reflect the settler perspective that dominates the print archives of these conflicts. There are ways to read this archive against the grain, and in recent years, some scholars have done compelling work in uncovering the experiences of New Englanders beyond the handful of names that dominate print culture, but it is worth remembering that we don't know what wasn't printed, because we can't read it, and it isn't catalogued. These readings inhabit a space between two ways to think about print culture. On one hand, print culture is a reflection of a culture in the print artifacts it produced; on the other, print culture is a thing in itself, where technology and human agency combine to produce a

⁶ At the same time, the peculiar vagaries of two New England settlers tussling in print in London remind us more generally of the limitations of Jürgen Habermas's influential account of the public sphere, where producing discourse is a disembodied and frictionless process for its authors. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991). For critiques of Habermas's failure to account for friction and embodiment, see especially Nancy Fraiser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, nos. 25–26 (1990): 56–80.

particular culture that is embodied in print. To generalize, the trajectory of scholarship has been from the former to the latter. Long ago, Perry Miller could speak of the “New England mind” as it was reflected in the published work of the leading intellectuals of New England, whereas now scholars are more likely to view print as a practice that exists with other aspects of a civilization, and one form of literacy among many.

The case of John Cotton offers us a chance to consider how print could both amplify and frustrate the work of one of the most powerful and influential figures in seventeenth-century New England.⁷ Cotton migrated from England to North America in 1633 and never returned to his homeland. After his departure, thirty-six works were published under his name in London. At the most extreme, Cotton’s authorship happens in forms that are expressly against his wishes. The Cotton–Williams debate mentioned above involved two separate fights that Williams instigated in print contrary to Cotton’s wishes. In 1643, Cotton’s *A Letter of Mr. John Cottons, Teacher of the Church in Boston in New-England, to Mr. Williams, a Preacher There* appeared from the press of Benjamin Allen. In early 1644, Williams’s response appeared in print in London from an unnamed printer. It is hard to see how Cotton’s letter would have found its way into print without Williams’s connivance. Similarly, Williams’s *Bloudy Tenent* takes the form of an extended commentary on Cotton’s 1635 commentary on a 1620 letter from an imprisoned Anabaptist. When Cotton has the opportunity to reply – some four years later – he makes his annoyance clear. Cotton states in his reply to Mr. Williams that while the letter is his, “how it came to be put in print, I cannot imagine. Sure I am it was without my Privitie: and when I heard of it, it was to me unwelcome Newes, as knowing the truth, and weight of Plinies speech, ‘Aliud est scribere uni, aliud omnibus.’” Cotton suggests that “there be those who thinke it was published by Mr. Williams himselfe, or by some of his friends, [who] tooke more libertie than God alloweth, to draw forth a private admonition to publick notice in a disorderly way.”⁸

Williams published two separate private letters from Cotton without his consent and against his wishes in an effort to open up a debate over the policies of puritan churches in New England, and also a broader debate about coerced religious belief. Williams’s intent was deliberately unfriendly and designed to offer him an occasion to publish a rejoinder. At the same

⁷ See Field, *Errands into the Metropolis*, 17–25.

⁸ John Cotton, “A Reply to Mr. Williams His Examination,” in *Publications of the Narragansett Club* (Providence, 1867), 2: 9.

time, even more sympathetic efforts to put Cotton's words in print in London could run counter to the minister's wishes. These breakdowns of the work could happen in several ways. Cotton was an enormously popular minister on both sides of the Atlantic, and there was, it appears, a fairly brisk market for printed versions of his sermons.

Ironically, it was Cotton's popularity that contributed to his loss of control of his own message. The circumstances vary, but in addition to the challenges of producing a transcript of a sermon as it is preached, some of these sermons appeared in print long after their delivery, and the delay can complicate an understanding of the evolution of Cotton's thinking. There are important books that have been produced from notes of lectures, but the fear with which a professor today might pick up a volume claiming to be their lectures transcribed by a faithful student suggests the pitfalls of this kind of publication. Indeed, Cotton's fans apologize for the way they put him into print – even as they put him into print. In a preface to the *Way of Life* (1641), William Morton admits, "How gratefull it may be to this Reverend author, that this work of his should come abroad into the publick censure, I know not. . . . [But] that desire I had of the Publicke good and the respect I have ever owed the author, inclined me to lend it the best furtherance I could."⁹

Inaccurate and untimely sermons comprise one way that print did not work very well for Cotton; more damaging still were controversial works appearing out of sequence. *The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven* (1644) was Cotton's definitive statement of Congregational polity; its message was confused by the later appearance of the *Way of the Churches of New England* (1645), an earlier account that had been circulating in manuscript.

If Atlantic print culture offered affordances for dissidents like Williams and Gorton, it created challenges for theologians like Cotton. The Atlantic magnified the difficulty and delay Cotton faced in debating his Presbyterian opponents by responding to this sort of unauthorized publication. In *The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared* (1648) (distinct from *Way of the Churches of New England*), shepherded through the press by Nathaniel Holmes, Cotton responds to Daniel Cawdry's rejoinder to his *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, *Vindicae Clavium* (1645). In *Vindicae Clavium*, Cawdry makes much of inconsistencies between Cotton's *Keys* and his *Way of the Churches of New England*. In response, Cotton opens by pointing out, "I have not had liberty to peruse the Way since it was

⁹ John Cotton, *The Way of Life* (London: By M.F. for Luke Fawne, and S. Gelibrand, 1641), [A 5–6].

published: but I see by the first words of it that the publishers had not the copy which was taken hence from me, but an imperfect transcript. But I do believe what the publishers do report . . . there is no material difference between the Key and the Way.”¹⁰ Here, Cotton must defend this text, which was published without his consent, of which he has not a copy, and to an audience with rather different concerns than those of three years previously. It is anachronistic, but Cotton’s struggles with Atlantic print culture here verge on the Kafkaesque.

For Cotton, then, there are at least nine sermons transcribed by others and published in London. There is one case where a preliminary version of his thinking on an ecclesiastical topic appeared in print after what he intended to be his final word on the topic. There are personal letters published without his knowledge or consent, and there are five responses to more or less hostile queries. These various forms of compromised authorship represent fully half of the titles that appeared in John Cotton’s name after his migration and before his death. To return to the idea of the work of print, for one of the most powerful men in the Bay Colony, print “worked” about half the time.

If print worked intermittently for John Cotton, it worked against one of his most loyal parishioners. Anne Hutchinson was one of the most influential religious figures in the early decades of the Bay Colony and managed to reach this prominence without publishing a word. Anne Hutchinson was the central figure in the Antinomian Controversy, a civil and ecclesiastical turmoil that unfolded in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the late 1630s. The terms of the debate revolve around technical questions of salvation, but the stakes were very real and included the banishment, departure, or disarmament of a significant minority of Boston’s leading citizens. As the leader of lay religious meetings some found more compelling than the sermons of Boston’s clergy, Hutchinson’s charisma and the clerical response to it was the precipitating factor for the controversy. Anne Hutchinson was a religious leader, but she never published a word.

The words that do survive from Anne Hutchinson are those that are recorded in the transcripts of her civil and ecclesiastical trials. Even calling Hutchinson an author is a vexed question, for her words appear in print only via the hostile medium of a court transcript. These conversations do demonstrate the extent of Hutchinson’s intellect and wit, but they offer a

¹⁰ John Cotton, *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (London: Matthew Simmons for John Bellamy, 1648), part 2, 2.

very constrained medium for her self-expression. That contemporary readers can access Hutchinson's voice only through court transcripts suggests the ways print technology can constrain individual expression and reproduce existing structures of power. There are very few female authors for students to read or for faculty to assign from puritan New England, and to question Hutchinson's status as an author is not to question her power or influence. Indeed, her ability to remain such a compelling figure in spite of having very little control over who tells her story and how they tell it speaks to the power of her words as her persecutors recorded them. Anne Hutchinson is perhaps the only figure who has been included in anthologies of literature solely on the strength of her testimony as a defendant under trial.

Even as the Antinomian Controversy shows the limitations of how we can access Hutchinson's words, the controversy itself demonstrates the power of print culture in a different context. As I have argued elsewhere in greater detail, the Antinomian Controversy that has been a focal point for scholars of puritan New England is an artifact of transatlantic print culture as much as it is an event that unfolded in time and place.¹¹ The printed texts describing the Antinomian Controversy to English audiences process the heterogenous chaos of colonial Massachusetts into a much sharper contrast between the everyday life of the colony and the challenge Hutchinson posed.

In the pages of Winthrop's journal, his concerns about Hutchinson share space with concerns about Natives, wolves, and sexual deviancy, to name only a few of the challenges facing the Bay Colony. However, five years after Hutchinson's exile from Massachusetts, Winthrop opted to present a narrative focused on this struggle to London audiences. Winthrop's *Antinomians and Familists Condemned by the Synod of Elders in New England* appeared in August 1644. Winthrop was moved to publish this account as a way to defend against assertions from Presbyterians that the Congregational way tended to foment errors.

In this form, *Antinomians and Familists Condemned* is not compelling reading. It begins by listing eighty-two errors with their confutations, and nine "unsavory speeches" and their confutations, and then presents what are essentially transcripts of the trials of the leading Antinomians, a brief account of the "monster" that Hutchinson supporter Mary Dyer allegedly birthed, and the ecclesiastical trials of Wheelwright and Anne Hutchinson.

¹¹ Jonathan Beecher Field, "The Antinomian Controversy Did Not Take Place," *Early American Studies* 6.2 (Fall 2008): 448–463.

It appears that this print did not do the work the Bay Colony hoped. Thomas Weld, in London representing the Bay Colony's interests, was motivated to produce a second edition, retitled the *Rise, Reign, and Ruine of Antinomians, Familists and Libertines*. Weld explains he was "earnestly pressed by diverse to perfect it, by laying downe the order and the sense of this story, (which in the book is omitted)." The "order and sense" begins thus:

After we had escaped the cruell hands of persecuting Prelates, and the dangers at Sea, and had prettily well outgrowne our wildernes troubles in our first plantings in New-England; And when our Common-wealth began to be founded, and our Churches sweetely settle in Peace (God abounding to us in more happy enjoyments then we could have expected:) Lest we should, now, grow secure, our wise God (who seldome suffers his owne, in this their wearisome Pilgrimage to be long without trouble) sent a new storme after us, which proved the sorest tryall that ever befell us since we left our Native soyle.¹²

If nothing else, Weld is a better storyteller here than Winthrop is, though his story does not do the work he hoped it would do. If Weld massages events of Massachusetts in the 1630s into something like a biker gang of Antinomians descending on a peaceful seaside town, the same Presbyterians who questioned the Congregational way took Weld's account not as evidence that the Bay Colony could handle its business but as evidence that this ecclesiastical form was one that made it possible for things to get out of hand. Presbyterian heresiographers such as Samuel Rutherford and Ephraim Pagitt cited Weld's account as proof that the Bay Colony would be "infested with heresies," unless they "come a little closer to Presbyteriall government."¹³

Anne Hughes describes this phenomenon as an "own goal," in that Weld boots the ball into his own net, but at the same time, as Weld's narrative recirculated in print in London through these Presbyterian heresiographies, it confirmed the narrative of Hutchinson as the singular threat to the stability of the Bay Colony.¹⁴ In these accounts of the Antinomian Controversy, we see print working, but not exactly in ways that either

¹² *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of Antinomians, Familists and Libertines*, in *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed., ed. David Hall (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 201.

¹³ Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist* (London: J. D. & R.I. for Andrew Crooke, 1648), 177.

¹⁴ Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 83.

Weld or his Presbyterian antagonists intend. Weld's account tells on itself, that it demonstrates the level of ecclesiastical controversy bedeviling Winthrop's City on a Hill. Even as Presbyterian heresiographers share this story as evidence of the failures of Congregational polity, they reinscribe a narrative where the complex soteriological debates among Bay Colony clergy become a Bad Thing a woman did. Print might not quite work for Weld or Rutherford, but it definitely works against Anne Hutchinson.

The radical religious dissident Samuel Gorton stands as an example of how print culture can work differently across different spaces. As I detail in *Errands into the Metropolis*, Samuel Gorton was an English settler with radical religious opinions that he presented in opaque and bewildering language. His faith and obstreperous personality rapidly made him unwelcome in Massachusetts and Plymouth, so he and his party of followers settled just south of Providence, at Shawomet, now known as Warwick, where they purchased land from Native residents there. The Massachusetts Bay Colony was unhappy to see the cantankerous Gorton with a toehold so close to their settlements, and based their claim to Gorton's land on a purchase they made from a different party of Natives. The Bay Colony sent soldiers to claim Shawomet by force and carried Gorton away to Boston in chains. Even in chains, Gorton was a nuisance for the Bay Colony, so they eventually turned him loose. Gorton went to England to make his claim for Shawomet to English authorities in the form of a book narrating his travails, *Simplicites Defence against Seven-Headed Policy*. This effort was successful, and Gorton returned to New England with a patent for Shawomet, which he named Warwick in gratitude to the Earl of Warwick, who was the head of commission that ruled in Gorton's favor.

Print worked for Gorton, but some of the features of this text show how print might not work for Gorton's neighbors. *Simplicities Defence* takes the form of a documentary history compiled by its protagonist, and Gorton's transcription of various documents authored by Natives is an important part of the case he makes. One crucial document is the treaty of submission to Charles I signed by several Native leaders in the area of the Narragansett Bay and presented in London in *Simplicities Defence* as evidence of Gorton's power and influence with the Natives there. The question of how print works, however, begins to unravel with the signatures of the sachems. Pessicus's mark is a bow and arrow; Canonicus, an inverted T; Mixan, a tomahawk (Figure 11.1). The argument that Gorton makes in print, successfully, has a foundation in the assent of people whose very names cannot be subsumed into the typographic conventions of the English language.

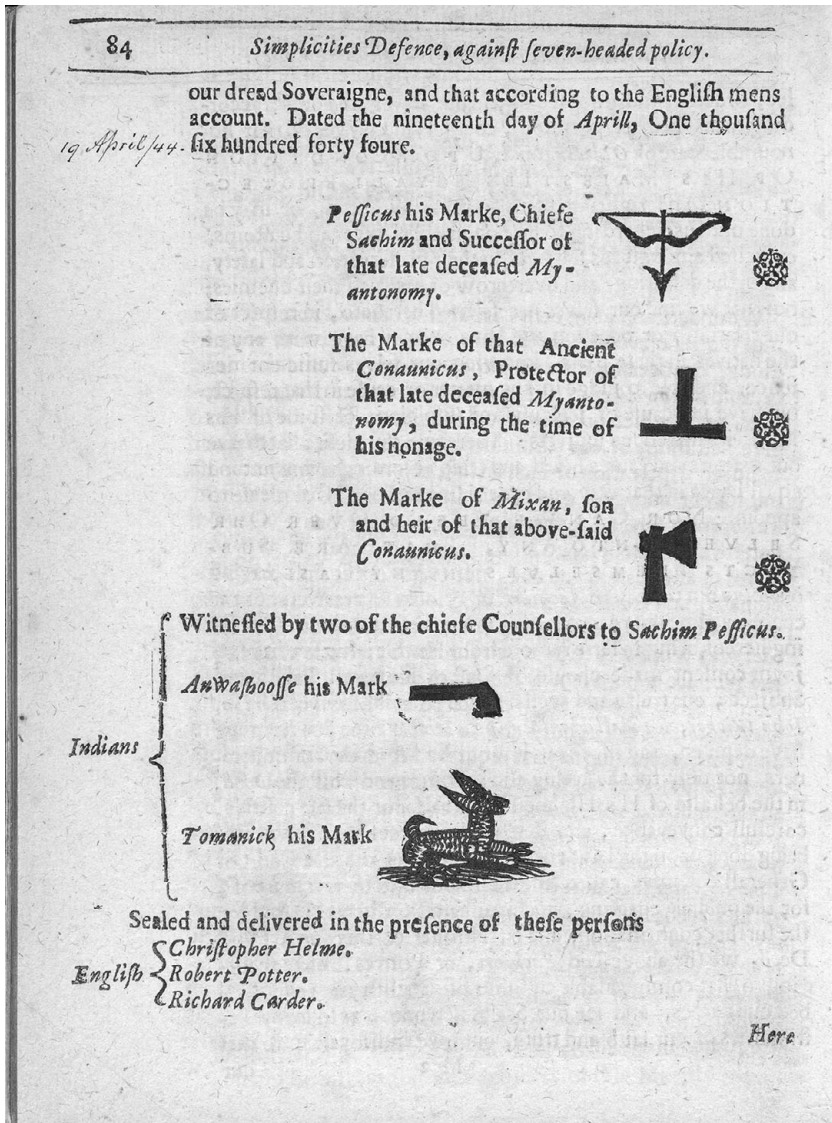


Figure 11.1 Samuel Gorton, *Simplicities Defence against Seven-Headed Policy* (1646). Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society

The vexed relation of Native New Englanders to settler print technologies takes on dimensions when we consider the career of the Nipmuck Indian named Wawaus, also known as James Printer. Printer attended Harvard College starting in 1659 and served as a printer's apprentice to Samuel Green. He provided essential support to John Eliot's translation of the Bible into the Massachusett language, which was published by Green. As Lisa Brooks details in her Bancroft Prize-winning history of King Phillip's War, Printer found himself in the curious position of setting the type for Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, a text in which he also appears as a character.¹⁵ There is a singular irony that the story of Printer's own captivity by the English does not fully enter print until Brooks reconstructs it in "The Printer's Revolt: A Narrative of the Captivity of James Printer."¹⁶ Printer works for a printer, but print does not work for Printer. Printer prints Eliot's Bible and Rowlandson's captivity narrative, but his own life story is one that requires retrospective reconstruction.

If who does or does not have access to the medium of print as an author shapes how print culture works or does not work for various people in seventeenth-century New England, the conditions of access to these printed works can also vary tremendously from one reader to another. These conditions of access shape the ways that both teachers and students of early American literature encounter the texts they study. The different conditions of access are more dramatic for early modern texts than they are for contemporary texts. For example, if we consider a popular contemporary text like Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* and imagine that it is being taught in a dozen different college classrooms – public, private, two-year, four-year, Ivy League, small liberal arts college, and so forth – the students in each of those classes will, in all probability, be reading *Citizen* through an encounter with an identical, mass-produced object, a book published by Graywolf Press, in 2014, with an identical ISBN of 1555976905 for students at Harvard and students at Tri-County Community College. If we consider an early American text, instead, there are a host of ways that students might access that text. For example, consider Mary Rowlandson's *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, her narrative of her captivity by Natives during King Philip's War. For some, it would be possible to consult a first edition of her narrative in the special collections of their university. For most it would not. Beyond this question of access, an instructor might

¹⁵ Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Phillip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 4–5, 87.

¹⁶ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 169–200.

choose to assign Rowlandson's narrative as it is reproduced either in whole or in part in any number of anthologies intended for teaching surveys of American literature. Alternately, the instructor might choose to assign Rowlandson as anthologized in a printed collection of either early American women's travel narratives or American captivity narratives, or a stand-alone contemporary edition of Rowlandson with supplementary documents. Beyond the world of print, there are a variety of digital transcriptions of Rowlandson's narrative.

For some students, their institution may subscribe to Early English Books Online, a resource that allows them to view PDFs of microfilm scans of virtually every book printed in English before 1700, including several editions of Rowlandson's story. At the same time, we encounter new conditions of access, as the cost of purchasing access to Early English Books Online makes it prohibitive for many schools, not to mention independent scholars.

To consider a case study of the print culture of American puritan studies, and the difference access can make, let us return to the Antinomian Controversy. Winthrop's original narrative of the Antinomian Controversy is a collection of documents. These documents, and the narrative appended to them, filter an ecclesiastical squabble out of the swirl of events in the Bay Colony in the 1630s and present them as a single epochal struggle for the future of the colony. Anne Hutchinson's complicated relation to print did not end with the disappearance of her antagonists and heresiographers. If we think about the affordances that print can create, the codification of documents related to the Antinomian Controversy in the twentieth century by David Hall, an eminent scholar of puritan faith and books, also shapes the Anne Hutchinson we know today. The first edition of *The Antinomian Controversy: A Documentary History* appeared in 1968, and in a revised version in 1990. This book had the effect of making a particular version of the Antinomian Controversy readily available to scholars anywhere. There are, arguably, relevant documents that Hall does not include: John Wheelwright's *Mercurius Americanus*, or even the much more understated account of these events that John Clarke includes in his *Ill Newes from New England*. However, especially in the years before ready availability for some scholars of early English books through digital archives, this anthology had the effect of making these particular texts much more accessible to students and scholars than other texts associated with the Antinomian Controversy. David Hall collected documents at a different time and with a different purpose than did Winthrop, and the choices he made had a significant

impact on how generations of scholars understand this pivotal moment in the early life of the Bay Colony.

If scholars need to recognize that there is both a print culture of American puritanism and a print culture of American puritan studies, it is also important to think about these print cultures in context. The kinds of literacies needed to participate in seventeenth-century New England print culture as an author were not available to the majority of seventeenth-century New Englanders. For starters, women are excluded from this milieu almost entirely. Literacy rates were higher in New England than in some other parts of colonial America, but still far from universal. The Indigenous inhabitants of New England did not have ready access to presses, either provincial or metropolitan, and the growing numbers of enslaved Africans in colonial New England were also excluded from this culture.

These exclusions make it all the more important to recognize that print is part of broader material cultures of communication that survive as resources for early American scholars. These archives are not always as legible as books are, and they can lack the totemic cachet of old books, but they are the resources we have as early Americanists work to extend the understanding of the colonial past to include more disparate voices.

In order to do this work of thinking more comprehensively about the work words can do, early American scholars will need to put in the work to extract information from archives that extend beyond printed books. In a 2007 essay for *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Carla Mulford points out that "we have not yet accounted for the lived experiences of most women, if we privilege learning in letters above learning in numbers. To knit, sew, create dyes and paints, cook, and get pregnant, women in the early era needed to have numeracy, the ability to count, typically from one to one hundred or at least in clusters of tens, whether they were counting stitches, proportions of colors or foods or spices, or days in their biological cycles."¹⁷

Closer to the experience of New England puritans, but further afield from print, Matt Cohen's *The Networked Wilderness* delineates ways that information flowed beyond and beside the parameters of print. One of Cohen's major interventions is to disrupt the monopoly that print has on

¹⁷ Carla Mulford, "Writing Women in Early American Studies: On Canons, Feminist Critique, and the Work of Writing Women into History," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 26.1, The Silver Jubilee Issue: What We Have Done & Where We Are Going (Spring 2007): 107–118, www.jstor.org/stable/20455310.

how puritan scholars imagine communication technologies: “Algonquian wampum, for example, when thought about as making meaning within certain performative spaces, could be understood as operating like a book at certain times. . . . Other indigenous North American semiotic systems fit this definition too, totem poles, ritual tokens, and possibly but not necessarily lithographic inscriptions and paintings.”¹⁸

Cohen, Mulford, and other scholars – notably, Tara Bynum – invite us to be literate in multiple literacies and to understand that there are many systems of meaning present in seventeenth-century North America that do not involve ink and type and paper.¹⁹ In the ensuing decade, many scholars have explored these systems. The collection *Early Native Literacies in New England* (2008), edited by Kristina Bross and Hilary Wyss, highlights some of this work, including Stephanie Fitzgerald’s consideration of a Mohegan basket, and Kevin McBride’s discussion of a Pequot medicine bundle. Quoting Lisa Brooks, Bross and Wyss note that alphabetic and other literacies interacted syncretically for Native populations and that Native literacies are a synthesis, rather than a succession of one system by another.²⁰ This approach supplants earlier accounts more influenced by the heroic model of print culture, where documents like John Eliot’s translation of the Bible into the Massachusett language represent a pivotal moment in the history of contact between settler and Native populations. Writing in a different regional context, Birgit Rasmussen avers that “Broadening the definition of writing in the Americas beyond a particular semiotic system – the alphabet – disrupts a whole complex of cultural meanings, as well as dynamics of dominance.”²¹

Taking a more expansive view, work such as Christine Delucia’s 2015 article “Locating Kickemuit: Springs, Stone Memorials, and Contested Placemaking in Northeastern Borderlands” describes the layers of meaning that can inhere around a specific place as a form of communication technology. More narrowly, Delucia describes how “‘Kekamenest Springe’ appeared in 1677 as a boundary point during settlement of a

¹⁸ Matt Cohen, *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 22.

¹⁹ See especially Tara Bynum, “Cesar Lyndon’s Lists, Letters, and a Pig Roast: *A Sundry Account Book*,” *Early American Literature* 53.3 (2018): 839–849.

²⁰ Kristina Bross and Hilary Wyss, eds., *Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 5.

²¹ Birgit Brander Rasmussen, *Queequeg’s Coffin: Indigenous Literacies and Early American Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 4.

land issue about the extent of Swansea.”²² As Delucia demonstrates, this collocation of a sign and a signifier is as much the semiotic work of meaning-making as is the association of the word “chair” with the thing one sits in.

These examples are a small sample of the burgeoning body of work engaged with Native literacies in their various forms. In this light, it may be time for scholars and especially teachers of early American literatures to reconsider the Native origin narratives that are a staple in American literature anthologies for undergraduates. Any anthology represents hard choices that result in inevitable compromises, but the question of “print-ness” as it applies to these texts raises a new kind of question. As a rule, literature anthologies are organized chronologically, and Native creation stories are presented before any settler narratives, puritan or otherwise. What qualifies these stories for inclusion in the narrative of American literature posited by an anthology is their appearance in print – this may seem to be stating the obvious, but if we decenter print as the sole medium of communication, the question of printedness takes on a new urgency. Typically, the Native creation narratives presented in anthologies are transcriptions of oral traditions that are created at some later date, but somehow, by their position in the anthology, they are meant to represent some kind of pre-contact manifestation of Native culture. One effect of this approach is to consign Native texts to a murky primordial era and to perform the kind of exclusion of Natives from the discourses of modernity that Jean O’Brien details in *Firsting and Lasting*.²³ It would require reimagining what an anthology is, but finding a way to include Native discursive practices – baskets, wampum, springs – that are coeval with settler texts would offer readers a way to imagine Native-settler relations as richer and more dynamic than the current model, which privileges a model of encounter and replacement. An anthology that is literate in literacies other than alphabetic print would have the potential to continue the important work of decentering the hegemonic and triumphalist narratives that constitute so much of the literature and historiography of puritan New England.

If scholars consider not only the print culture of puritan American literature but the print culture of puritan American literary studies, both

²² Christine DeLucia, “Locating Kickemuit: Springs, Stone Memorials, and Contested Placemaking in Northeastern Borderlands,” *Early American Studies* 13. 2 (Spring 2015): 483.

²³ Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 3–4.

challenges and opportunities multiply. A practice where we are more attentive to the lives and afterlives of the texts we study – as well as the texts that are not there for us to study – is more work but also offers all of us more to say and more to do. One feature of bourgeois life in the twenty-first century United States is a renewed concern with where food comes from. One form this preoccupation takes is the popularity of “farm-to-table” as a label for restaurants that offer transparent and ethical sourcing of the plant, dairy, and animal products they serve. As we consider the futures of print culture in puritan American literary studies, we need to take an approach that considers the vagaries, inclusions, and exclusions of print from contact to the colony and from colony to the classroom.

*Ritual**Matthew P. Brown*

Of its many insights, the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne has suggested the power of ritual to rethink American puritanism. His literary art slyly spied and agonizingly exposed places of transformation, liminal settings such as the forest in “Young Goodman Brown,” the maypole in “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” and, most thoroughly, the door, the pulpit, and the scaffold in *The Scarlet Letter*. In this view, Hawthorne used fictional narrative to dwell in the paradoxes of a faith that would reject formality, all the while reinstituting regularized behavior and resituating ceremonial space. From the vantage of literary fiction, Hawthorne spotlights the tensions and contradictions of puritanism. But from the vantage of cultural history, this is no contradiction at all. With the steady eye of social anthropology and with an attentive ear to the historical actors themselves, we can glean a set of customs and rites that vitalized everyday religion for puritans, or precisianists, or the hotter sorts of Protestants in seventeenth-century British America. One approach to the ritual life of early New England is to think of the other great tension in puritan self-definition: literacy. *Sola scriptura*, the promise of vernacular access to the Word, piety propelled by individual contact with biblical content – the zeal of the Reformed tradition lay in its perceived contrast with Catholicism’s hierarchical relationship to Latin. At the same time, literacy was reined in by the ministry, structured by idealized behavior in the Bible, organized by an ideology of education, and prescribed by conduct books. Then, as now, literacy was marked as much by regulation and socialization as it was by voluntarism and emancipation. In this view, reading, ritual, and reading rituals provide perspectives on lived puritanism that should greatly interest students and scholars.

However much ministers and theologians opposed the deadening formalities of Anglicanism and the lifeless cant of Rome, both the learned and the lay participated in an experiential religion suffused with ritual. Ritual in early New England operated at various levels: the life-cycle occasions

(birth, marriage, and death), the annual structures (fast days and thanksgiving days, election sermons, calendars for completing the Bible in a year), church-oriented rites (the sacraments, the public confession and conversion relation, the audition of preaching, the singing of psalms, the covenant renewal), and diurnal practices (kneeling, praying, meditating, covenanting, and reading).¹ Many if not most of these rituals were text-centered theaters of literacy, where verbal performance – the broadside elegy and the funeral, the sermon notes by the auditor, the extractive perusal of the Bible reader – derived from the physical presence of the word. Indeed, perhaps the stronger tension in puritanism is a theory of language espousing the immateriality of God's word, whereby readers internalize sacred discourse, impressing it "not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart" (2 Cor. 3.3), all the while foregrounding the materiality of paper and quill, print and ink, sheet and book. Heart piety was always complemented by the sensory experience of hand piety (the tactile operation of books) and eye piety (the contemplative gaze on objects and topics of devotion).

Reading matter itself was normatively divinized: along with the Bible and the almanac, the trades made godly books the popular, circulating literature of the day. Guides to conversion, sermon series, psalm books, and manuals of piety were ordered and reordered by Boston booksellers, and New England bookmakers reprinted them. Their dependable sales could cover, as David D. Hall puts it, centuries. Inexpensively formatted, the most popular works of practical divinity were Lewis Bayly's *The Practise of Pietie* (1612), Henry Scudder's *The Christian's Daily Walke* (1627), and Joseph Alleine's *An Alarime to Unconverted Sinners* (1672). Crucially, the steady sellers emphasized behavior, in what might be called a mode of Renaissance soul-fashioning. They were manuals in at least two senses: teaching users how, for example, to fast, pray, and meditate *and* making such instruction user-friendly through manual operation – indices, tables of contents, running headers, margin call-outs – to find discrete chapters, passages, and lessons.

¹ Principal sources for this sketch are William Deloss Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895); Charles Hambrick Stowe, *The Practice of Piety* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Knopf, 1989); Richard Gildrie, *The Profane, the Civil, & the Godly: The Reformation of Manners in Orthodox New England, 1679–1749* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

For devotional readers, rituals were potentially means of grace: not a force that caused God to come to the devout but rather the means whereby, if the spirit were to visit, it could make itself felt. Ritual and ritualized reading meant a two-phase cycle of purgation and fulfillment. Preparatory humiliation – supplication, abasement, abjection – is the first, purgative phase; closing with Christ, a closeness to God, and a growth in grace is the second phase of fulfillment. Piety of heart, hand, and eye name versions of this felt cycle, embodying the means of grace. Progress in the redemptive pilgrimage was never secure, and ritual life for the pious, even post-conversion, was constantly anxious and embattled. Indeed, the reading protocols of the period were only in part a linear pilgrimage; they were equally fragmentary and discontinuous, with verses, passages, proverbs, and affirmations serving to console and cajole, harangue and hearten.²

The following pages elaborate this model of ritualized reading, surveying three instances of readers in action in early New England. First, Mary Rowlandson's account of captivity is perhaps the most compelling work we have of cross-cultural encounter and contest in the period, troubling and moving by turns; it has received less attention as a record of reading.³ Second, the Thompson family left a scattered but powerful archive of reading practices. A blank book used by the father Joseph Thompson sits in the Houghton Library at Harvard, while a copy of the devotional handbook *Vindiciae Pietatis; or, A Vindication of Godliness* owned by Joseph's sons Edward and Samuel Thompson vivifies the shelves of the American Antiquarian Society. Selectively annotated by the users, this latter artifact demonstrates the readerly moves of extraction, rumination, supplication, and play. Third, a frontispiece illustration to a steady-selling conduct manual emulates ideals of reading, both noble and wicked. Remaining in print for more than a hundred years, Benjamin Keach's *War with the Devil* was published in small formats, making not only for affordability and portability, but also relatively large numbers of copies per edition. The image accompanying many editions cinches the relationship between reading and journeying, the ritualized arc named – for early modern Christians generally and early New Englanders specifically – pilgrimage. Yet it works with principles of graphic design to arrest that

² I elaborate these conceptual premises in *The Pilgrim and the Bee* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

³ Michael Warner mentions Rowlandson as a reader in "Uncritical Reading," in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. Jane Gallop (London: Routledge, 2004), 29–30.

movement and foster the bee-like practice of hovering and selection, a mode of ritualized stasis.

All three examples expose larger patterns. They show how reading was understood not as enlightening nor as diverting but rather as transformative, seeking to change mind and body, prompting action in the world. And they show how reading was ritualized. Reading socialized readers into customary acts of fasting, prayer, and meditation, and reading itself was also a part of the gestural, oral, and embodied theater of behavior in early New England. These customs and behaviors installed their own rites and ceremonies in worship practices presumably purified of set forms, liturgy, and iconography. I conclude with reflections on what the essay might contribute to the methodologies of readership history, ritual analysis, and object-oriented ontology.

The Contact Zone

One evidential source for literacy's ritual activities is life-writing, where memoirists reflect on the experience, habit, and matter of reading. An extraordinarily rich account for these purposes is Mary Rowlandson's narrative of being held by Wampanoag, Nipmuc, and Narragansett peoples for eleven weeks in 1676 during Metacom's War. Typically, scholars use such a source to understand ritual ethnographically, a highly mediated account that can gain some access to another culture's rites and ceremonies. But the biases of western ethnography in such reports operate equally – through fantasy, projection, and displacement – to disclose the deeply held but disavowed qualities of a home culture's ideologies. In this bivalent view of ritual in the contact zone, we recognize, with context, what Rowlandson does not see about, say, the wampum potlatch ceremony prior to her release. While Rowlandson dismisses her captors "Throwing out Wampom to standers-by" as a kind of illogical waste, the economy of excess instead serves ceremonially to express goodwill, largesse, and entailment (a canny diplomatic effort by Weetamo and Quanopin as negotiations between the parties seek resolution). But the contact zone is also a liminal space for settler-colonial writing, displaying, in this case, puritan ritual in extremis, as Rowlandson seeks the tradition and authority of repetitive form. Reading is the behavior that provides Rowlandson with ritual stability, in numerous scenes illustrating the material theater and immaterial ideation of puritan book culture. Consider when, in the Eighth Remove, Rowlandson meets her son Joseph. Having been given a Bible by a captor early in her journey, she asks Joseph

whither he would read; he told me, he earnestly desired it. I gave him my Bible, and he lighted upon that comfortable scripture, Psal. 118, 17, 18. *I shall not dy but live, and declare the works of the Lord: the Lord hath chastened me sore, yet he hath not given me over to death.* Look here, *Mother*, (sayes he), did you read this? And here I may take occasion to mention one principall ground of my setting forth these Lines: even as the Psalmist sayes, *To declare the Works of the Lord*, and His wonderfull Power in carrying us along, preserving us in the *Wilderness*, while under the Enemies hand, and returning of us in safety again. And His goodness in bringing to my hand so many comfortable and suitable Scriptures in my distress..⁴

Exchange and practice figure in this scene of reading, in measures equal to what is read. The mother entreats the son, he reciprocates, the book is given over, and the discussants reengage: the two enact bonds of affection through the language of invitation, acceptance, and query – *and* through the book object, its transference from hand to hand. To be sure, *what* they read matters: the verse is descriptive (they have been chastened sore as captives) and prophetic (she will declare the works of the Lord in her narrative). But the style of reading matters too. Joseph “lights upon” the verse, active but humble, submitting to a larger force, like a bird finding rest on the limb of an anchoring tree. Mary Rowlandson goes further, calling this God’s “goodness in bringing to my hand so many comfortable and suitable Scriptures.” Arguably, these are what dispositions and decisions feel like within Christianity as a comprehensive faith system – surely not a modern’s “free” choice, but surely not a passive or duty-driven experience either. If Joseph is part bird, he is also part bee: he extracts nectar from the book, a drop of verse that comforts – and empowers.

He and his mother use the reading ritual to articulate power as a redeeming order in the context of war and captivity, “power” understood as both the invocation of an external authority (here the Christian God) and the strategy of human actors seeking iterative forms for local meaning.⁵ Mary Rowlandson finds redemption both existentially, in surviving, and agentially, as a motive force, post-survival: she envisions the efficacy of

⁴ Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682), ed. Neal Salisbury (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 82.

⁵ Theorist Catherine Bell would call the passage a scene of ritualization, where agents produce authority through actions that take on the color of ritual. In this theory, ritual actors subscribe to a model of “redemptive hegemony.” “Redemption” signals that actors experience a reality where they are placed in a moral order and where “they can envision the efficacy of acting within such an order of relations”; “hegemony” refers both to the dominant culture’s institution of a “necessary illusion” and, though Bell undervalues it, to the agential work of the relatively powerful and powerless to extend or resist domination. See Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 84, 85, 88–93.

her acting in this divinized world and it authorizes her recording and publishing these “*Works of the Lord*.” Indeed, the passage embeds the two-stage cycle of purgation and fulfillment, where the humiliation of captivity prepares for converting strength, while illustrating literacy’s mix of the volitional and the scripted in Reformation culture. We see transformative reading as well. Rowlandson explicitly states the verse is “one principall ground of my setting forth these Lines.” The behavioral dimensions of reading in early New England are more subtly traced by the semiotics of the hand. Joseph practices an indexical reading in locating Psalm 118:17–18 – the index finger navigating, roaming, finding – and Mary refers both to the “Enemies hand” and “my hand.” The keen inversion, from being “under” to “bringing to,” reminds us of the continuum of hand-based activities, from operating a book to taking communion to performing prayer, that propel and vitalize the devout.

The Book Artifact

But writing from the contact zone merely makes overt the ritual activity present in everyday life for the New England devout. While constant mobility and wilderness settings help foreground puritan ritualization, the customs and mores of pious reading are found throughout sources documenting lived religion in the period. Consider book artifacts, with their reader marks and signs of use. The Tompson family’s copy of Richard Alleine’s *Vindiciae Pietatis; or, A Vindication of Godliness*, held now at the American Antiquarian Society, articulates the mores surrounding both literacy and ritual in early New England.⁶ With seven editions between 1663 and 1676 (along with free-standing excerpts of single sections amounting to another six editions through 1699, as well as reprints in the Wesley “Christian Library” of the eighteenth century), *Vindiciae Pietatis* was a moderately steady seller. It featured an octavo format slightly larger than the tubby brick one would see typically for the devotional manual. But in terms of content, Alleine subordinates the two sermons printed in the book to an “Application” section that is over 200 pages, more than half of the volume’s matter. He guides users on the procedures for ritual behavior, such as meditation, self-examination, prayer, and

⁶ *Vindiciae Pietatis*, Reserve 1664 05, American Antiquarian Society (AAS). Copy of Richard Alleine, *Vindiciae Pietatis; or, A Vindication of Godliness* (London, 1664). The provenance history confirming Samuel and Edward Tompson as the readers marking passages in this copy is found in Clarence Brigham, “Report of the Librarian,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 24 (1914): 243–244.

covenant renewal. The volume's navigational aids – tables of contents and headers – lead users to such passages. The AAS copy testifies to such use: multiple autographs of owners over the decades, custom bookplates dating from the seventeenth century, and a binding of worn leather, pasteboard, and an amateur canvas rebacking. But the evidence of use also points to meaning, in the frameworks I have been mooting. Annotations on the endpapers and in the main text reveal the logic of puritan ritualization, as reading humbles and enriches the reader. The reader marks equally reveal the transformative nature of literacy among godly Protestants. Such conduct-oriented reading is not simply documented by the activity of mark-making, though that should not be gainsaid. Instead, the very content of the Thompson family notes refer to behavior.

No clearer illustration of the artifact's synthesis of reading and ritual is found than on the endpaper notes, at the back of the volume, where Samuel or Edward Thompson has created a key to scripture based on reading Alleine, titling it "For Regulating my Thoughts." Biblical citations demonstrate the extractive reading so elemental to the devout, a ready reference that governs the user's attitude toward joy, fear, hatred, and trust.

For Regulating my Thoughts

Jer. 4.14. Isai 55.7 Mal 3.17 Psal 104.94
 Phil. 4.8. Pro.23.26 Deut 15.9 Eccles 10.20.
 Pro. 24.9 Mat 9.4 Zech. 8.17
 For my Affections. Col. 3.2.5. Gal. 5.24.
 For my Delight Psal. 1.2 Psal. 37.5.
 For my Joy Phil 4.4. Psal. 43.4.
 For my Desire Isai 26.8.9. Ezek. 7.16.
 For my Love. Mat 22 3, 7 psal 119.97
 For my Hatred Psal 97.10.
 For my Fear Luke 12.1. 5.
 For my Hope Psal 39
 For my Trust Psal 62.8 Isai 26.4
 For my Speech Eph. 4. 29 Col. 4.6. Deut. 6.6.7.
 Psal 119.46. Psal 71.8. 24 Pro 31.26.
 For my Work. Tit 3.8. 2 Tim 2.12.
 2 Tim 5.10. Tit. 2.14. Mat. 5.47.
 1 Tim 6.8. Rev. 3.2. Rom. 13.12 Acts 26.20⁷

⁷ *Vindiciae Pietatis* (AAS), endpaper.

This is pious but hardly unreflective reading: Tompson has selected passages derived from Alleine and the Bible to integrate mind (“Thoughts”), feeling (“Affections,” “Desire”), and action (“Speech,” “Work”). Such passages are touchstones for the reader, established as moments of ritual return to fashion self and soul. Certainly, the citations might be held as a mode of heart piety, memorized and internalized. But the list is equally suggestive of hand piety, the movement of the user collating two books, in this case the Bible and the endpaper of reader notes in the Tompson family’s copy of *Vindiciae Pietatis*. Whether memorized or consulted, the scripture passages amount to a kind of devotional commonplacing, topoi available for ritualized meditation or execution.

Blank leaves at the front of the copy allow the Tompsons a different engagement with ritual and reading. Samuel repurposes an “Analysis of the Creed,” a commentary on the meanings of the Apostolic Creed (Figure 12.1).⁸ The context for the annotation speaks both to popular piety across confessions – all Christians could see the creed as historically and soteriologically foundational for the church – and to potential controversy – the creed played a liturgical role that the hotter sorts of Protestants rejected. So, while not ceremonial for Congregationalists in New England, the creed was a ritual text of lay devotion. It appeared in countless godly books, its twelve articles featured as transcription, with commentary, or in catechisms. And yet it was perceived as formality, with all the hostility the zealous could direct at such a practice. For example, William Perkins complains of visitors who, rather than offering authentic comfort when helping the sick, mindlessly chant the creed, “uttered without understanding.” Like Rowlandson’s dismissive attitude to Algonkian ritual, Perkins defines his practice agonistically, against perceptions of church formality. The Tompsons fashion the creed as an “Analysis of the Creed,” with comments interspersed as the articles are transcribed. It appears in a uniform block of prose, most likely to conserve paper, but equally to collapse comment and article, to give equal weight to the foundational statements and the believer’s contributions. To be sure, such analyses were themselves boilerplate in godly books, though this one is evidently a composite woven from previous commentary and devotional learning. Transcription of orthodoxy – the creed – merges with the

⁸ The Westminster Assembly’s instructional text features the standard creed. See *The grounds and principles of religion, contained in a shorter catechism (according to the advice of the Assembly of Divines, sitting at Westminster) to be used throughout the kingdom of England and dominion of Wales* (London, 1646), 30.

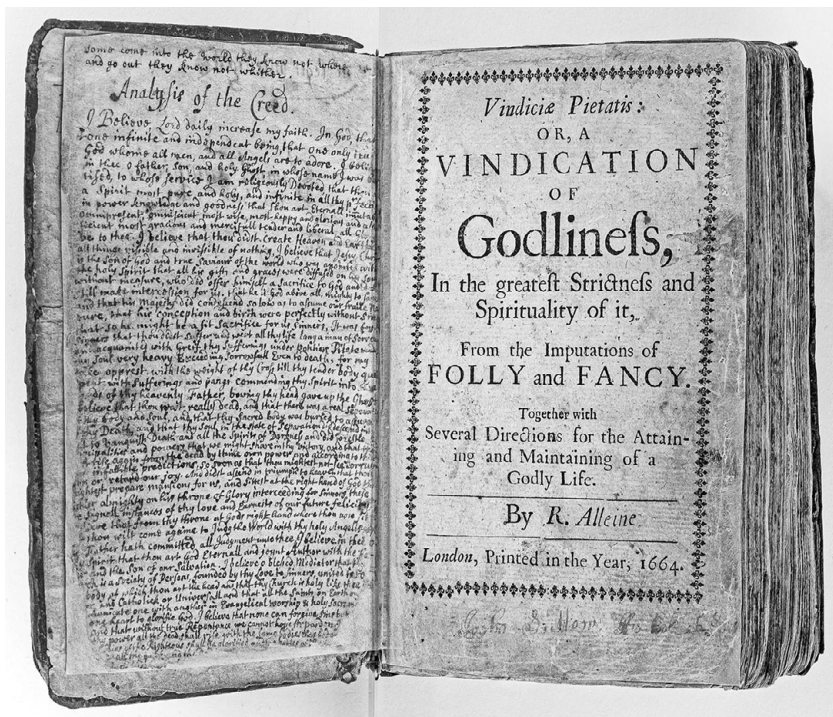


Figure 12.1 Creed and title page in Tompson family copy of Richard Alleine, *Vindiciae Pietatis* (1664).

Courtesy American Antiquarian Society, Reserve 1664 05

transcriber's input – the analysis – in a portrait of the tension between individualism and regulation at the heart of puritan literacy. So too, the handwriting features framing material that demonstrates the purgative, humbling status of the pious. In tiny script, the Tompsons preface the title (with its oversized hand, its two capitals, and its blank space) with a sentiment so familiar to the devout, in what Perry Miller called the Augustinian strain of piety: “some come in the world they know not whereof and go out they know not whither.”⁹ In Samuel Tompson's transcription, popular devotion transposes and displaces the liturgical setting into a personal or family realm.

⁹ *Vindiciae Pietatis* (AAS), pastedown endpaper, facing title page; William Perkins, *A Salve for a Sicke Man* (London, 1611), 105; the phrase “some come in the world” appears cobbled from cadences of the Gospel of John and from “whither I am going, I cannot tell,” in the Richard Alleine volume *Vindiciae Pietatis* (London, 1664), 258.

Be that as it may, other reader marks within the volume point to agencies that are partly ludic and partly reverential, in response to Alleine's ironies and injunctions. With didactic sarcasm, Alleine lists ten kinds of conduct sure to land the practitioner in hell: "*Do as others do*," "*Let thy Will be thy Law*," and "*Stand fast in the liberties of thy Flesh*." About such corrupt principles, Alleine states it will "help sinners to understand themselves"; thus he "shall mention som of the chief of them, in number *Ten*; which, if you will, you may call, *The Devil's ten Commandments*."¹⁰ And indeed, Samuel or Edward *does* call them that, creating, in the Table of Contents, a navigational aid to find the three-page pastiche, inserting by hand an entry for "The Devil's Ten Commandments 145" right after "*Of Judgment* 140" and before "*The Duties and Comforts of Godliness are No Fancies* 151." In an artifact that holds the earliest-known custom bookplates made in early New England, Samuel – perhaps a younger Samuel – adds a further owner's mark. From pages 180 to 202, he uses the foot of the facing page verso in signatures O–P to insert the letters of his name, one by one. Tompson paces his letters such that recto leaf P4 – the last of the printed "P"s for that gathering – becomes the "P" between the "M" and "S" of his handwritten last name.

But this playful context misses an immediate condition of some spiritual concern. Samuel begins the spelling exactly where Alleine shifts his volume to "The Application of the Whole," where the sermon gives way to godly behavior. Samuel ends the spelling on a page where Alleine implores readers to put themselves in covenant with God, to search the self in secret and then pray to the Lord, with a set prayer included. This is preparatory humiliation, the purgative, supplicating phase of the means. This recto, facing Samuel's final "O," is marked in the upper right corner with a figure (perhaps a personal navigational aid, like dog-earing) and handwritten comments at the footer: "his search the accompt." The urgency of Alleine's message and the gravity of the reader's marking, searching, and accounting makes us revisit the letterform play. Early New England was replete with textual genres such as acrostics and anagrams that were used to reveal, say, an elegiac subject's merits.¹¹ Similarly, the alphabetic culture of Psalm 119 – an essential text of lay devotion and an abecedar, composed and

¹⁰ Alleine, *Vindiciae*, 145.

¹¹ See William Scheick, "Tombless Virtue and Hidden Text: New England Puritan Funeral Elegies," in *Puritan Poets and Poetics: Seventeenth-Century American Poetry in Theory and Practice*, ed. Peter White (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 286–302; Matthew P. Brown, "'BOSTON/SOB NOT': Elegiac Performance in Early New England and Materialist Studies of the Book," *American Quarterly* 50.2 (1998): 306–339; and Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee*.

retained procedurally by following the alphabet's sequence, each of the eight lines in the stanza beginning with the letter to which that stanza is dedicated – evokes the divinized meaning of letterforms. Authorized by the Bible in Lamentations and other psalms, such play betrayed a serious piety. In this light, Samuel would recursively lead himself to the page through his name's letters, to perform then the rites of preparatory humiliation, the physical motions of kneeling and prayer.

Alleine devotes pages to covenant renewal, the personal vow comparable to the church vows that became popular in the second and third generations of puritan settlement. But he frontloads the vow itself in the opening section "The Application of the Whole" (see Figure 12.2). Emerging from the set prayer is a presentation of the vow itself:

This Covenant I advise you to make, not only in heart but in word, not only in word, but in writing; and that you would with all possible reverence spread the writing before the Lord, as if you would present it to him as your act and deed. And when you have done this, set your hand to it; Keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations.

Sitting on the top half of the page in roman (after five pages of italics for the prayer) and in a larger point size, the covenant invites writing, both in blank books and in blank spaces. Indeed, prior to the text's return to the smaller roman, Samuel inserts his signature below the covenant. And at the page's footer? The initials "E T S T" are inscribed – crudely drawn and perhaps either a young Tompson's marks or an elder's handwriting in decline – standing for "Edward Tompson Samuel Tompson." But moreover, and with greater intensity, as if documenting how each element of the covenant is both framed and spread before the Lord, Samuel circles every word of the vow in blank ink. A presentation of act and deed available to Samuel's reading at any stage of his journey, the circling makes the single word rather than single letter a locus of meaning. Each word is a memorial and each will provide recourse in times of backsliding. He sets his hand to it.

The Visual Icon

Reading that is ritualized and transformative can be gleaned from the visual culture of steady sellers as well, deepening an exploration of eye piety. The frontispiece illustration to, say, Lewis Bayly's *The Practise of Pietie* existed, by conservative estimate, in 50,000 copies in seventeenth-century England alone, which only begins to hint at hits and page views of

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The Author's Advice.

THis Covenant I advise you to make, not only in heart, but in word, not only in word, but in writing, and that you would with all possible reverence spread the writing before the Lord, (as if you would present it to him as your act and deed.) And when you have done this, lay your hand to it, Keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you, that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations.

Samuel Thompson

And now Beloved, having shewed you the way to the Father, give me leave to be instant with you, in pressing you to hearken to me herein; to come and joyn your selves thus to the Lord. And if you will not be perswaded, to this solemn and expresse way of Covenanting with him, (which I believe you will find a great advantage, and do therefore make it my great request unto you.) Yet, if you will not do that, take heed you refuse not to engage your hearts to the Lord; and make a full closure with Christ, upon all the particular termes laid before you; till that be done, I must be bold to tell you again, as I have told you already, that you are short of Christianity, strangers from the Covenant of Promise, and Aliens from the Common-wealth of Israel.

Bre-

E T S T

Figure 12.2 Thompson family copy, *Vindiciae Pietatis; or, a Vindication of Godliness* (1664). The covenant, with annotations by Samuel and Edward Thompson.

Courtesy American Antiquarian Society, Reserve 1664 05

the image as it was shared in its era's social network. The steady-seller illustration participated in a range of early modern iconographic traditions within Reformation Protestantism. Reflected in emblem books, eschatological gravestones, Foxe's book of martyrs, illustrated Bibles, church design, and almanacs, this visual culture nurtured kinds of reverence for the puritan devout. First published in 1673, Benjamin Keach's *War with the Devil* presented, in dialogue form, proper behavior for the young male Christian. By 1776, the title had gone through twenty-two editions, beginning in octavo and reduced in size to portable twelvemo and sixteenmo formats over its life span. Its shape, content, and reprint history qualify it as a classic steady seller. Part of a canon of ritually consulted texts, the illustration within *War with the Devil* was itself ritually encountered, on the liminal threshold of reading the main text. And it was ritualized through routine, absorbed each time a reader would take up the conduct book to find choice passages. Calling on biblical allusion, citation, and figuration, the image presents conduct both idealized and demonized to help pilgrims on their path. The frontispiece conjoins speech, gesture, and writing and thus prompts action within the larger scripts of the Reformed tradition.

With the rules of western literacy in mind – that our eye travels left to right and top to bottom and that graphic design, as it mixes word and image, can break the rules for effect – what do we see in Figure 12.3? At first glance, on the recto, a male pilgrim ascends to a crown of glory and the light of heaven. The legend “The youth in his Converted State” heralds the image. But such a caption has less power perhaps than the convergence of word and image on the pilgrim's ascent. Inscribed along the path is the citation from Matthew 7:14: “Narrow is the way that leads to life” (an inscription that is equally proverbial and speech-based in its resonances). These verbal cues of legend and inscription create horizontal and diagonal axes, respectively, that steer the reader-viewer's processing of the image. Nevertheless, visual lines created at the center of the image overpower these axial directions. These central lines dramatize the youth's conflict. Not only do a band of rowdies target him with spears, but a devil looms separately from them, further up and across the path, darkened to symbolize malevolence, with a bow and arrow shooting directly at the pilgrim. The proper pilgrim identity, even post-conversion, is one under siege. And what blocks these slings and arrows? A book, held dead center and open to a page spread revealing lines of text. Gaining power from the rays of the sun, the image of lines of text mix trim size, reading matter, and heavenly light to make the book both shield and revelation.



Figure 12.3 Benjamin Keach, *War with the Devil* (1737). This version differs slightly from the 1683 version described in the main text; the latter uses “&c” and presents dainty foot motions by the youth in his natural state. See *War with the Devil: or, The young mans conflict with the powers of darkness in a dialogue ...* (London, printed for Benjamin Harris, 1683).

Courtesy University of Iowa Special Collections, PR3539.K13 W3 1737

The converted youth was often presented as a diptych with “The youth in his Naturall state.” Posed on a worldly horizon, a dandy with sash, dress robe, wig, and cap is unaware of the legend “Broad is the way etc,” from Matthew 7:13. From Matthew 7:13 sort of, in that the “etc” – substituting for “that leadeth to destruction” – seems so internalized that readers need not read it. Or perhaps they simply need to follow the words down, to the lower right corner, the most heavily weighted area of the visual field due to the movement of the eye within the rules of western literacy (from left to right and top to bottom): the diagonal citation leads one to the bodies in hell that await the youth in his natural state. A circle of revelers on the worldly horizon seem equally ignorant of their destruction.

More generally, a series of contrasts between the postures of the two protagonists subtly communicates kinds of action in the world, evoking the bodily experience of hands and feet. The dandy leans on a cane while resting his other arm on his waist, the hands facing downward or curling inward. Compare this hellish, dependent selfishness with the converted youth, the open posture of his arms and hands, vertically oriented upward and outward, with one hand itself both supported by and supporting that essential tool of Protestant godliness, the book. Similarly, the feet of the dandy point delicately toward destruction, on tiptoe, with a shadow cast by the upraised soles. The feet of the pilgrim, however, plant astride the narrow path and forward to the viewer, a stable right angle aware of the work the ascent will take. Occupying the weighted lower right corner, the convert's feet serve, with the book, as anchor to the image. Foot piety? Perhaps, but broadening the scope: the feet remind us as well of the odd scale of the figure, which takes up two-thirds of the vertical length of the frame and, with the sin-ridden honesty of the puritan worldview, is darkened, through a black robe, to create a visual rhyme with the devil figure. But however embattled, the complaisance of the converted pilgrim staring serenely at the viewer suggests a final, crucial sightline that continues the idealization of the figure.

What might we conclude from this survey of reading, rituals, and reading rituals in early New England? I leave with three implications for the argument. First, in terms of method, I hope to have shown the rich potential still available to scholars intrigued by the history of reading as a field of study. The essay models the sorts of archival sources and evidentiary moves typical of readership history but which have mostly lain fallow since the 1990s. Second, the reading habits of the New England devout help us elaborate a theoretical proposition advanced by Catherine Bell. Ritual, for Bell, is best understood as a (endless) retranslation of an extant problem for the social formation under study – a catching up of its tensions – rather than a neat solution of the society's contradictions. In this view, the tensions at the heart of puritan reading rituals – the linear and the nonlinear, the overarching narrative and the discontinuous fragment, the pilgrim and the bee – *are* the heart of devotional consciousness. Scholars of puritanism are best served by describing rather than resolving this contradiction. The life of piety *is* this paradox; as Richard Sibbes says, “none are fitter for comfort than those that think themselves furthest off.”

And the codex format – which is both the pilgrim's progress and the bee's random-access reference work – nurtures such a ceaseless psychology of anchoring and unmooring, of deepening anxiety pre- and post-conversion, of more devotion and more doubt.¹²

But what do this essay's findings contribute to readership history and ritual theory? Drawing on the new materialism and object-oriented ontology, a third implication might strengthen the methodologies on display here. Consider the preceding pages and their emphasis on the hand and the book. These are pivot points for a subject's will and an object's agency, a phenomenological fulcrum that embodies the voluntarism and regulation of the puritan devout's self-relation. This self-relation coordinated the hand with persons and things. The hand-object dynamic might be one of opening, from genuflecting prayer to ministerial ordination. Or the dynamic might be one of puritan othering, such as the perception of the Catholic devout's handling of a rosary (rather than a book) or the emphasis on an Algonkian leader severing hand and object by "Throwing out Wampom to standers-by." The book and the hand are part of what new materialists would call a network or assemblage, a tethering of things, climates, ideas, and persons that performs causal change. In recognizing the agential force of the nonhuman, object-oriented ontology is not without its share of woo woo.¹³ Nevertheless, a ritual theory that fully opens itself to objects (Bell is oddly mute on ritual's nonhuman surround) would attend to the agency not only of the humans and authorities intrinsic to the moment but also of the life-world of things, entangled and efficacious in the moment as well. A readership history that would learn from the thingness of its records – the material platforms of word and image – and treat that experience with all the depth it treats discourse, language, and representation would similarly advance our understanding of the felt dimensions of literacy.

I lay stress finally on the phenomenological fulcrum of hand and book, however, as an address to object-oriented ontology. The new materialism's deliberate provisionality is less suited to studies of ritual. If our job is to track assemblages as they dissipate and reconfigure, we would miss certain constants that provide ritualized activities their heft and endurance.

¹² Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 105–106; T. Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 145–146; Sibbes, *The Bruised Reede, and Smoaking Flax* . . . (London, 1630), 43.

¹³ While there have been any number of material turns over the last thirty-five years, a deft and rich survey of recent trends, with zero trace of woo woo, is Sonia Hazard, "The Material Turn in the Study of Religion," *Religion and Society* 4.1 (2013): 58–78.

My claim is that the fulcrum of hand and book in early New England is one such site, a place of cleaving, where robes, skulls, wampum, a child, gravestones, communion silver, leather reins, a bow, veins, and bread also might cross and swarm, but which orbit and gather force radially around leaves touching fingers, palms cradling spines, the book snug and sundered in the hand.

*Manuscript Culture**Meredith Marie Neuman*

Ann Bradstreet's prominence in early American literary history derives largely from her status as a print author. Famously, her brother-in-law had her poems published in London in 1650 as *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America* – apparently without her knowledge or prior consent. After her death, the posthumous collection *Several Poems Compiled with Wit and Learning* was printed in Boston in 1678 with her edits and additional poems as well as a final section of still more poems she apparently had not intended to add, as well as supplementary memorializing material. That first print event establishes her legacy as a kind of founding mother of American poetry and of American women's writing generally, while the second print event ensures Bradstreet's inclusion in accounts of the earliest history of the book in America. And yet, if not for the celebrated contingencies of Bradstreet's seventeenth-century *print* publication, her literary output might better be known as a particularly good example of puritan *manuscript* culture. Fewer texts might be extant without those earliest printings, but Bradstreet would still have been a representative manuscript poet who mingled pious poetry and prose and who – like many other writers of her general time, station, and aspirations – considered manuscript publication to be the norm.¹ Studying puritan literature (Bradstreet's or any other writer's work) requires a sense of the erratic paths that seventeenth-century New England writing take in the world as well as the material contexts out of which emerge more or less

¹ For the definitive bibliographic account of Bradstreet's print publication, see Roger E. Stoddard and David R. Whitesell, *A Bibliographic Description of Books and Pamphlets of American Verse Printed from 1610 through 1820* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press for the Bibliographic Society of America, 2012). With some notable exceptions, scholarship on Bradstreet as a manuscript poet comes mainly from early modern English literary studies. See, for example, Gillian Wright, *Producing Women's Poetry, 1600–1730: Text and Paratext, Manuscript and Print* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For an important transatlantic approach, see Phillip H. Round, *By Nature and by Custom Cursed: Transatlantic Civil Discourse and New England Cultural Production, 1620–1660* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).

stable texts that can be gathered up in anthologies and modern editions. The aim of this essay, then, is to elaborate the ways that the logic of manuscript culture informs puritan literary culture across material genres, using Bradstreet's unusual case to elucidate typical means of manuscript practice, production, and circulation.

A bit of knowledge of manuscript culture, its generic and practical conventions, and its role in the larger world of "colonial mediascapes"² can go a long way in enabling new insights and more nuanced readings of puritan texts derived from various original sources. Early modern manuscript culture consists of many different material textual genres (famously, letters, journals, and conversion narratives but also sermon notes, annotations in almanacs and other printed media, miscellanies, and account books of all sorts), most with a distinctive rationale for and balance of textual and material meanings. Notebooks (a catchall and promiscuous category of often otherwise indeterminate definition) in particular demonstrate generic fluidity and material overlap of all kinds. Genres mingle and subsequent owners add their own content, sometimes creating provocative palimpsests, as when John Dane's son records sermons in shorthand in the blank spaces his father left in the midst of pious poetry, personal narrative, sermon notes, and records of business dealings.³ In the physical space of a book, a single author might implicate one form of writing with another. The prominent Massachusetts Bay Colony merchant John Hull kept a manuscript notebook that he would flip upside down and backward so that both covers could function like the front of a distinct but related book – public memoirs in one direction and private memoirs in the other. Sermon notetakers who dutifully recorded weekly installments of their primary minister's sermons continua (extended explications of single passages of scripture that could last weeks or even years) would frequently interrupt the sequences with occasional sermons by visiting clergy, notes of church or secular business, and other personal asides. The Cambridge minister Thomas Shepard's own notes on sermons to which he listens are recorded in the reverse direction in the same book where he records his congregants' spiritual narratives. Most broadly,

² I borrow this term from *Colonial Mediascapes: Sensory Worlds of the Early Americas*, ed. Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

³ John Dane is a good example of a relatively obscure puritan who nevertheless left a manuscript record behind; much more can be learned of his experiential self than his biographical existence. For more on visibility and invisibility in the archive, see Meredith Marie Neuman, "The Versified Lives of Unknown Puritans," *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 107.3 (2013): 355–366.

sermon culture obscures distinctions of authorship and audience, originality and citation, and complicates presumed boundaries between genres.

Sources originally printed in the seventeenth century – such as sermons, controversial writings, missionary literature, and assorted justifications of settler colonialism – can also be read for the manuscript culture from which they develop. They reflect orality, even in their inscribed forms, as well as visual and material culture. Printed sermons are inextricably connected to sermon notetaking: notes record the public speech act of the sermon both for private means of individual reflection and as a resource for use in the semi-private space of the home with intimate gatherings of family and community. Thus, the manuscript record connects public and domestic discourses as well as elite and nonelite speech acts. As private documents, sermon notes and spiritual journaling also foster print publication. Notes find their way to the press with or without the minister's knowledge, sometimes providing content for unauthorized publication, and other times helping ministers to correct, clarify, and enlarge their own imperfect notes for delivery. Individual cases of conscience, conveyed in both handwritten records and irrecoverable oral discourse, make their way into the objections, questions, and myriad applications of sermon literature as it was printed. Throughout, manuscripts complicate notions of authorship premised on the primacy of print publication.⁴ Traces of oral and manuscript culture in print preserve the extraordinary performativity of puritan texts and their deep “intermediality” (the interdependency of different media, such as print, manuscript, and oral narratives, that characterizes much of seventeenth-century literary production).⁵

⁴ Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). For puritan manuscript culture more specifically, see Meredith Marie Neuman, *Jeremiah's Scribes: Creating Sermon Literature in Puritan New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁵ Although this essay is primarily concerned with manuscript culture, often in relation to print culture, a sense of the deep intermediality is not complete without considering oral, visual, and material culture, as well. In addition to *Colonial Mediascapes* and *Jeremiah's Scribes*, see Matthew P. Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss, eds., *Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008); David D. Hall, *Ways of Writing: The Practice and Politics of Text-Making in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Matt Cohen, *Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Sandra Gustafson and Caroline Sloat, eds., *Cultural Narratives: Textuality and Performance in American Culture before 1900* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); and Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

Manuscripts have always held a prominent place in puritan studies, largely because of the extraordinary content they offer the scholar. These rarified artifacts often hold additional appeal for the reader as seemingly unfiltered textual records, offering tantalizing insights into political struggles, theological controversies, personal relationships, and even hidden motivations in a way that the printed record does not, not to mention fantasies of being a “fly on the wall” witnessing unmediated subjective immediacy. And yet the invaluable textual content of these works tends to overshadow the ways in which the materiality and accidents of manuscript practice itself contain, alter, and deflect meaning. Manuscript culture is much more than its textual content. The conventions of certain genres – as well as the idiosyncrasies of individual artifacts – all carry their own complex systems of signification. In many cases, textual meaning might be incomplete without an understanding of the materiality of the manuscript. For example, John Winthrop’s print *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines*, an account of the disciplining in the late 1630s of dissidents in New England by Bay Colony authorities, is incomplete without reading it alongside the unpublished trial notes of Hutchinson (“Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court of Newtown”), who was perhaps the best known of the so-called antinomians, as well as other such transcriptions of a fraught manuscript record. This juxtaposition has been made widely accessible to students of puritan literature thanks to David D. Hall’s indispensable *Documentary History of the Antinomian Controversy*.⁶ Taken as a sequence in a well-edited and footnoted volume, the documents collected together in Hall’s modern edition weave a clear, if complex, narrative of emergent orthodoxy in the face of dissent.

What is less immediately apparent, unless one digs into the complications of manuscript production, circulation, and survival – the very complications that modern editions are meant to simplify – is the complex intermediality represented in the twelve documents. As Hall elaborates more fully elsewhere, manuscript creation and circulation function in varied and complex ways, with scribal publication (rather than print) a strategic way of controlling pressing political and theological arguments.⁷ Each of the twelve documents in the modern edition of *The Antinomian*

⁶ David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

⁷ Hall, *Ways of Writing*. For strategic publication via the transatlantic print world, see Jonathan Beecher Field, *Errands into the Metropolis: New England Dissidents in Revolutionary London* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press/University Press of New England, 2009).

Controversy has its own unique rationale and textual trajectory. Each reflects the complexity of oral and written culture, private and public discourse, rapidly evolving stakes and contexts, interpersonal dynamics, and accidents of time, place, and occasion. If a reader would seek to “hear” Anne Hutchinson’s voice in the “Examination,” that reader must bear in mind the biases of the source, the conventions of court transcription, and the vagaries of recording oral testimony. The survival of the manuscript source itself and its careful curation over time introduces additional contingencies. What other traces of ephemeral speech acts, related to these ongoing theological arguments in late 1630s Boston, have not survived because the source stood outside the mechanisms first of state power and then of antiquarian interest – the means through which print literature and archival materials are preserved? Sermon notes, spiritual narratives, and other more sundry records from the period during and after the Antinomian Controversy reflect lived experiences and the everyday application of theological matters more famously argued among the clerical elite, but such sources are more elusive than the ones created and preserved both by individual authority figures and through broader structures of power. Those that do survive require painstaking cataloging, travel to archives, permission to access collections, experience with reading seventeenth-century letter forms, and the time to decipher degraded ink marks that may be none too clear in the first place.

Most readers of puritan literature already engage with texts that, until their transcription and print publication in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have existed primarily as manuscripts. That manuscript legacy often remains legible through internal, textual evidence and through idiosyncrasies that point to complicated textual and editing histories. For instance, the attentive reader might notice among the latter-day scholarly footnotes in the standard edition *Of Plymouth Plantation* one that transcribes William Bradford’s own latter-day annotation “in his aged hand on the blank page opposite,” mourning the loss of the bonds of fellowship described in the earlier main text, or another that describes the falling silence of the final, blank leaves after the last written entries:

Anno 1647. And Anno 1648.⁸

Or consider that the indeterminant genre of Governor John Winthrop’s “Model of Christian Charity” (is it a lay sermon? a political speech? a textual discourse never spoken?) mirrors the uncertainty of its original

⁸ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647* (New York: Modern Library, 1981), 34, 385.

composition. Was it written “On Boarde the Arrabella,” as the only extant seventeenth-century copy – not in Winthrop’s own hand – states? Or was it composed and circulated before Winthrop ever departed for New England?⁹ The manuscript presents more mysteries than it resolves. Then again, a first-time reader might feel real confusion when encountering the shifting timelines and blurred identities of the opening of Shepard’s autobiography to his son (also named Thomas, who is told of the death in infancy of his older brother, *also* named Thomas), as well as the shifting pronouns in the spiritual narratives that Shepard records as he listens to speakers (in the manuscript he toggles frequently between the “I” with which the congregants refer to themselves and the “he” or “she” that indicates his third-person point of view). Such shifts mark the vagaries of both conversion experience and manuscript composition.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the minister-poet Michael Wigglesworth’s *Diary* continues to challenge standard editorial practice with his use of shorthand for explicitly sexual passages that has provoked important critical inquiry about the complicated interplay of secrecy and legibility.¹¹

⁹ This compositional uncertainty is summarized in the standard, abridged, modern edition of *The Journal of John Winthrop*, ed. Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 1, n. 1, which cites Hugh J. Dawson’s argument in “John Winthrop’s Rite of Passage: The Origins of the ‘Christian Charities’ Discourse,” *Early American Literature* 26 (1991): 219–231. For Winthrop’s text and its legacy, see Abram C. Van Engen, *City on a Hill: A History of American Exceptionalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

¹⁰ Although a more recent edition with Shepard’s autobiography and a selection of the Cambridge confessions exists, I strongly recommend the reader instead seek out the following sources for these important seventeenth-century manuscripts. For Shepard’s recording of his congregants’ conversion narratives, see the full and richly contextualized George Selement and Bruce C. Woolley, eds., *Thomas Shepard’s Confessions* (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1981). This important publication is available digitally, thanks to the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, at www.colonialsociety.org/node/1124. An important supplement are the further discoveries by Mary Rhinelander McCarl in “Thomas Shepard’s Record of Relations of Religious Experience, 1648–1649” (Notes and Documents), *William and Mary Quarterly* 48 (July 1991): 432–466. Happily, Nehemiah Adams’s *The Autobiography of Thomas Shepard: Celebrated Minister of Cambridge, N. E.* (Boston: Pierce and Parker, 1832) is accessible in a digitized version at <https://archive.org/details/autobiographythooadamgoog>. Various orthographic features of the manuscript are represented in an early twentieth-century transcription in “The Autobiography of Thomas Shepard,” Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXVII, Transactions, 1927–1930 (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1931), 343–400, which also includes sundry business and other notes also found in the manuscript but transcribed (so far as I can tell) nowhere else. This rewarding glimpse of the idiosyncrasies of the actual manuscript object are also freely accessible via digitization of the Transactions, thanks again to the Colonial Society, at www.colonialsociety.org/node/460.

¹¹ For a crucial essay on the unfixity of manuscript in relation to the fixity of modern print editions, see Jordan Alexander Stein, “How to Undo the History of Sexuality: Editing Edward Taylor’s *Meditations*,” *American Literature* 90.4 (December 2018): 753–784.

Understanding manuscript culture, then, is key to reading puritan literature, but the vast majority of readers do not have ready access to archives holding these rare and fragile manuscripts. Accordingly, the ultimate goal of this chapter is not to insist on the physical examination of rarified manuscript artifacts but, rather, to provide strategies for identifying and reading manuscript culture within any puritan text, regardless of the physical format in which it is encountered. In this respect, Bradstreet offers a particularly helpful introductory case study because our reading of her published works can be supplemented by the open-access digitization of one of her manuscripts.

Bradstreet's deep investment in manuscript culture is evident even in familiar texts associated with her print legacy. A common rationale for manuscript circulation resonates in "The Author to Her Book," one of the poems added to the posthumous 1678 edition, when the speaker (typically read biographically as Bradstreet) complains that her imperfect work was "snatched" from its more comfortable circulation among a coterie of acquaintances "by friends, less wise than true, / Who thee abroad, exposed to public view."¹² Clearly in reference to the earlier 1650 print publication of her work, *The Tenth Muse*, the poem has traditionally been read as a narrative of Bradstreet's desire for private (presumably dutiful and feminine) manuscript circulation versus a public (ostensibly transgressive, especially for a woman) print publication. Scholarship drawing on studies of manuscript culture in the early modern period has allowed for more complex interpretations of the poem, suggesting that the public/private dichotomy has been overstated and that Bradstreet certainly would have been a willing and active participant in the dissemination of her poetry within the context of what Margaret Ezell has called "social authorship."¹³ As the many dedicatory poems by elite men in England and New England make clear, Bradstreet was already known in overlapping, transatlantic circles.¹⁴

"The Author to Her Book" also clearly follows the conventions of the apology poem, of which there are several in both the 1650 and 1678 print

¹² Anne Bradstreet, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 221, ll. 4–5.

¹³ Ezell, *Social Authorship*. Margaret Olofson Thickstun offers the best recent overview of the complicated editorial history of Bradstreet with an eye to the simultaneous existence of manuscript versions and print editions of the poems in various configurations. See Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains: Why We Need a New Edition of the Poems," *Early American Literature* 52.2 (2017): 389–422.

¹⁴ For an Americanist perspective on Bradstreet's transatlantic relevance, see Round, *By Nature and by Custom Cursed*.

editions of her works. In the seventeenth century, an “apology” meant something more like a “rationale” or “justification.” Most famously, Bradstreet offers such an apology for female authorship in the well-known “Prologue,” which preemptively addresses the concern that “I am obnoxious to each carping tongue / Who says my hand a needle better fits.”¹⁵ There is a disconnect between the speaker’s opening claim that “To sing of wars, of captains, and of kings, / Of cities wounded, commonwealths begun, / For my mean pen are too superior things” and the title page (not composed by Bradstreet herself, of course) that announces as two of her primary topics “an Exact Epitomie of the Four Monarchies” and “a Dialogue between Old *England* and New, concerning the late troubles,” raising the question: To what configuration of her poems, exactly, does the “Prologue” refer?¹⁶ And, of course, the existence of an apology that can be used for the 1650 print edition itself suggests that Bradstreet absolutely expects her poems to circulate, just not necessarily in print.¹⁷ The tension between competing media forms is amply evident in the implicit dialogue between the “Prologue” (first printed in 1650 but presumably addressing manuscript circulation) and “The Author to Her Book” (first printed posthumously in 1678 but apparently foreseeing potential print publication). Less obviously, “The Author to Her Book” might also be read in dialogue with the dedicatory poem to her father, Thomas Dudley – a poem that also functions as a kind of implicit apology prologue to Bradstreet’s set of four dialogue poems known as the Quaternions (“The Four Elements,” “The Four Humours,” “The Four Ages of Man,” and “The Four Seasons”) and the monumental but incomplete “Four Monarchies.”¹⁸ The poem appears in both the 1650 and 1678 print editions and precedes the more famous “Prologue.” There are, in short, many prefatory and “apology” poems.

More importantly, throughout these various prefatory and apologetic poems there is a complicated sequence of assertions, defenses, and retractions that adhere inadequately to the order in which they appear in either print version. If these competing apologies are read not as finalized versions

¹⁵ Bradstreet, *Works*, ed. Hensley, 16, 15.

¹⁶ Bradstreet, *Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung up in America* (London, 1650). Although the illuminating text of the title page is not reproduced in the Hensley edition, the interested reader can easily locate many digital facsimiles of the celebrated page via a simple Google search.

¹⁷ Thickstun neatly summarizes the tone of “Author to Her Book” in light of manuscript circulation, making the distinction that “The emotion resulted from the *medium* in which the poems appeared, not the revelation that she had written them.” Thickstun, “Contextualizing,” 397.

¹⁸ In fact, the incompleteness of “The Four Monarchies” gets its own concluding “Apology” poem in the 1678 print edition.

“fit to print” but as poems in complicated temporal and thematic relation to other poems circulating in manuscript, the rhetorical and occasional fluidity of Bradstreet’s poetic projects over time reveals itself. Unlike print publication, which would seem to fix order, chronology, and signification, manuscript circulation of poetry is endlessly customizable to circumstance and relationship. Surely a new modern edition of Bradstreet’s poems that allows the reader to trace more clearly the permutations of print and manuscript authorship alongside the complicated publication chronology is fervently to be desired, daunting though the prospects of such a project are.¹⁹ In the meantime, however, the unruly juxtapositions and editorial ambiguities of the best available modern edition might serve as a reminder of the indeterminate fluidity of seventeenth-century manuscript circulation.

If the texts of individual poems can be read to reveal a sense of manuscript circulation and authorship, a thorough textual and material consideration of the so-called Andover manuscript can help delineate a more typical form of puritan literary output and engagement than do either of the seventeenth-century imprints. In particular, the manuscript – an excellent digitization of which is freely available thanks to the Houghton Library²⁰ – represents a common phenomenon of familial manuscript production and preservation. The volume appears to have been prepared originally by Bradstreet herself to pass on to her son, Simon, and begins with a dedicatory letter to him dated March 20, 1666 (in the digitization, these images are designated “seq. 4–5”). Bradstreet pens

¹⁹ Thickstun has helpfully elaborated the challenges and difficulties of the still indispensable Hensley edition, first published in 1967, which remains in print to this day.

²⁰ Anne Bradstreet, 1612?–1672. *Meditations divine and morall*: manuscript, 1664–1672? MS Am 1007.1. Stevens Memorial Library deposit, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. The digitization can be accessed via its persistent link <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL.Hough:4465803> or by searching the Harvard University Hollis online catalog. The manuscript is on deposit at the at the Houghton Library from the Stevens Memorial Library in North Andover. Part of the manuscript’s mystique in the twentieth century stems from its discovery in a New Haven junk shop in the 1930s (the sequence of which events are described in the Harvard University Hollis catalog record), but the artifact was in the hands of the Bradstreet family in the nineteenth century, and text from the manuscript was being transcribed and printed in the 1840s in the *Congregational Visiter* and later, in 1867, in John Ellis’s edition of *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*. A handwritten copy of many parts of the Andover manuscript in an unknown hand (though sometimes and probably erroneously ascribed to Sarah Bradstreet) at the Houghton Library has also been well digitized. A. Bradstreet, Simon Bradstreet, and Sarah Bradstreet, *Meditations Divine and Morall: Manuscript, [not before 1672]* (1672), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, MS Am 1007. A comparison of the two manuscripts and their respective provenance markings speak to the phenomenon of making manuscript copies of family papers generally, but as the hand in the copied volume is difficult to identify and date, I am setting it aside for this discussion of seventeenth-century manuscript circulation.

seventy-seven “Meditations Divine and Morall” (seq. 6–44). In the space below the last entry, Simon pens a note that the work was interrupted by his mother’s death (the much later hand, probably of a librarian or archivist, supplies that date in pencil as September 16, 1672). In the leaves following the prose “Meditations,” Simon copies in a mix of poetry and prose from various other manuscript sources (including at least one other manuscript book), none of which is known to be extant today (seq. 46–70). Simon then copies in a Latin translation (presumably his own?) of his mother’s prefatory letter and of the first four of the seventy-seven “Meditations” (seq. 72–75). After twelve blank leaves (seq. 76–99) and one cut leaf (seq. 100–101), the poem “As a Weary Pilgrim” appears in Bradstreet’s hand on both sides of the final leaf, with ink from recto and verso bleeding through (seq. 102–103). Inscribed names suggest multiple generations of ownership, and other more recent indications of provenance (including library labels), as well as various stray marks (mostly pen trials and assorted numeric figures), appear in the front and back paste downs (seq. 3 and 104). Partial clasps remain on the boards, and the volume is modestly bound in calf with minimal blind tooling, a style typical of seventeenth-century New England notebooks (seq. 2 and 105). The front inside flap of the protective box in which the manuscript is shelved has also been digitized and contains two labels, one indicating that the volume is on deposit from the Stevens Memorial Library (North Andover) and the other a record of conservation work in 2010 (seq. 1). All of these details are evident in the digitization. Eclectic in its contents, with various prose and poetic genres bumping up against each other in multiple hands, the manuscript is both intimate and indeterminate, didactic and open ended, crystallizing a single moment’s introspection and yet accumulating the markers of a shifting provenance over time.

The intimacy suggested in the physical configuration of entries and accumulated markings in the Andover manuscript resonates in the texts of the poems and prose writings. Some explicitly use direct address (e.g., “For My Dear Son Simon Bradstreet,” “To My Dear Children”), while others convey intimacy through Bradstreet’s exploration of deeply personal experiences (e.g., “For Deliverance from a Fever,” “Meditations When My Soul Hath Been Refreshed with the Consolations Which the World Knows Not”). Some of these poems that seem most personal to the modern reader are also the ones most frequently collected into mass-market anthologies but in ways that strip them of their manuscript context and meaning. Manuscripts can seem to offer a sense of intimacy bordering on intrusion. We are, after all, reading letters, diaries, and so on. But although some

manuscript genres might be considered particularly private forms today, in a seventeenth-century context we might understand them to premise a limited privacy. A letter writer, for example, might expect more than a single recipient to read the correspondence (and, indeed, letters not only circulated but copies were often made for dissemination and copied into notebooks, for preservation and record keeping). Sermon notes were often read aloud as part of religious teaching and pastoral care. Spiritual introspection (in either diary or memoir form) might be intended for descendants' benefit as much as for one's own.²¹

The lyric poems and pious prose in the Andover manuscript were apparently drawn from a number of manuscript sources, and if Bradstreet's papers resembled those of other New England puritans, they were likely quite varied in their textual genres and material forms. That is to say, in bringing a specific text out of one material manuscript and inserting it into another, their generic signification also shifts. The poems in the Andover manuscript might have been understood by Bradstreet and her family to be relatively more private than, say, the didactic long-form poems originally printed in *The Tenth Muse*. Nevertheless, they were part of a larger body of writing that could be published strategically in various forms – some preserved in the Andover manuscript and others in the posthumous print edition *Several Poems*.²² And, presumably, there were even more examples of Bradstreet's manuscript production that we can only imagine because they do not survive. Some pieces may have been too private, too rough, too illegible, or too mundane to be considered for preservation through either print or manuscript. Others might simply have disappeared for no reason at all but bad luck.

As the sense of privacy (and therefore intrusion) connected with manuscript textualities can be overstated, so too can the sense of immediacy (and therefore transparent authenticity). The poem "Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House July 10th, 1666. Copied Out on a Loose Paper" creates a vivid sense of immediacy, beginning *in medias res* as the speaker awakens in the night to "That fearful sound of 'Fire!' and 'Fire!'"²³ Of course, the poem is highly mediated textually – a finely tuned exegesis of a biographical incident, a bit of verse casuistry on

²¹ Michael Wigglesworth's diary, or at least the portions that he writes in shorthand dealing with sexual desire, are in a sense the exception that proves the rule.

²² See Round, *By Nature and by Custom Cursed*, and Wright, *Producing Women's Poetry*, for helpful analysis of the 1678 additions.

²³ Bradstreet, *Works*, ed. Hensley, 292.

the topic of weaned affections.²⁴ But the poem as it appears in the Andover manuscript is highly mediated *materially* as well – a text copied into a particular volume by Simon, with specific framing, and as part of a particular order of latter-day additions to an existing manuscript artifact. This material mediation is apparent in the title itself, which is not so much a title (although it has been used as such since its print publication in the nineteenth century) as a description of the manner of its preservation.²⁵ It is also worth noting that neither this poem nor any of the other pieces included by Simon in the Andover manuscript was included in the 1678 posthumous edition of Bradstreet's poems, even though it is very likely all of these texts would have been available. It is impossible to know how decisions regarding the circulation of Bradstreet's manuscript writings transpired in the years after her death in 1672, but we can begin to speculate by considering that both the print and manuscript posthumous reproduction of poems may well have drawn upon a similar – if not identical – body of Bradstreet's manuscript writings.²⁶

The poem "Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House" signifies *textually* also, revealing other complicated contingencies of manuscript culture and the precariousness of manuscript survival. In this case, a poem that is about the loss of objects both material and sentimental presumably survives only because of a son's filial devotion to ingather manuscript texts from various sources into a single manuscript object. The pious text and the manuscript artifact both survive over successive generations of the Bradstreet family in part because of the historical prominence of the family. Bradstreet's own fame may or may not have been enough to ensure the survival of the Andover manuscript, but the historical and hierarchical importance of her father and husband (who each served multiple terms as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony from 1634 through 1692), would have greatly increased the chances of survival for any papers, first in family collections and then in

²⁴ See Neuman, *Jeremiah's Scribes*, ch. 5, for ways that sermonic modes can be read in puritan literature, especially via oral and manuscript culture.

²⁵ See Thickstun, "Contextualizing," on Simon's ordering in the Andover manuscript and subsequent titling.

²⁶ Six poems were likely intended by Bradstreet to be included in a putative second edition of her poems. These appear after the last poem from the 1650 edition, "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan," and include two elegies on the death of her father and mother, respectively, three religious contemplations, and finally "The Author to Her Book." Fourteen additional poems were "made by the Author upon Diverse Occasions" and "found among her Papers after her Death, which she never meant should come to publick view; among which, these following (at the desire of some friends that knew her well) are here inserted." *Several Poems Compiled with a Great Variety of Wit and Learning* (Boston, 1678), 237.

institutional archives. One can only imagine – but this act of imagination is crucial – how many papers from less elite families have not survived and been archived.

The worldly vanity that is Bradstreet's topic in the poem neatly conjures up the precariousness of manuscript culture itself. How much paper went up in the flames along with the household furnishings in the 1666 conflagration? And is that the same fire that finally brings to an end the ongoing but often languishing *magnum opus* "Four Monarchies"? In her "Apology" at the end of the final "Roman Monarchy" section in the 1678 posthumous edition (another kind of retrospective prologue), Bradstreet explains the lack of closure at the same textual point where the 1650 print version breaks off: "I hours not few did spend, / And weary lines (though lank) I many penned. / But 'fore I could accomplish my desire, / My papers fell a pretty to th' raging fire."²⁷ Puritan manuscript artifacts are vulnerable and always potentially ephemeral, but manuscript culture itself is constant and even mundane. Accidents of preservation and serendipity of discovery – in conjunction with larger structural biases of whose paper trails are likely to be preserved in the first (and last) place – determine what will survive and what will be read.

Over and over, both the materiality and the textuality of the Andover manuscript suggest that Bradstreet's writing (importantly, prose as well as poetry) is generically fluid and can be adapted to shifting occasions. Simon's manuscript interventions miraculously increase the chances for the survival of the physical artifact and thereby significantly expand the range and scope of Bradstreet's extant writing. At the same time, however, his textual interventions after his mother's death also alter whatever it was that Bradstreet originally intended. Close attention to the manuscript as it would appear *without* Simon's additions allows the reader to contemplate what, exactly, she might have imagined the volume to be. Bradstreet's prefatory note to Simon suggests the general purpose of the manuscript object is to collect and preserve for him applicable lessons that she has gleaned from a life in faith, and the project is incomplete, possibly still ongoing until the point of her death. The location of the poem "As a Weary Pilgrim" in the last leaf suggests (but does not prove) the possibility that Bradstreet early on "bookends" the volume herself with a letter at the beginning and a poem about approaching death at the end.²⁸ That is to

²⁷ Bradstreet, *Works*, ed. Hensley, 178.

²⁸ Close physical examination of the structure of manuscript codex would be required to see if the leaf appears in any way to be added later, but any risk of damage from that intrusive process would be

say, the physical space of the manuscript book is configured as the remaining temporal space of her life.

Bradstreet's "Meditations Divine and Morall" seem to be the main project that she intends to pursue in that space. The short prose entries of pious observations based on long life experience, each consecutively numbered, are neither rough drafts nor finely polished. In addition to the expected range of cross-outs, blots, and corrections, there are minor alterations to word choice, suggesting that at the moment of inscription her exact phrasing was still at least partially in flux.²⁹ At some points, Bradstreet's numbering regularly ends up at the bottom of the page preceding the meditation to which it refers. In typesetting, text stranded at the end of a page like this is called an "orphan." In manuscript practice, the separation would likely indicate that the writer prioritizes saving space (although Bradstreet's pages are not particularly crowded otherwise) or that the text is in process, moving continuously across page divides. In the case of the Andover manuscript, the orphaned numbers suggests that Bradstreet might have written the number for the next meditation immediately after completing the previous one.³⁰ The section concludes not with the text of Meditation 77 but with the orphaned number 78 (much like Bradford's silent ending just listing two years with blank spaces), and that orphaned, unfilled number renders particularly poignant Simon's note in the space at the foot of the page that she "intended to have filled up this Book with the like observations but was prevented by Death." The orphaned numbering and the note are also helpful in understanding the original rationale and ongoing practice of the volume. The Meditations seem to anticipate the final poem, "As a Weary Pilgrim," with room allowed for the filling-in of lived experience (the spiritual and biographical, as textually and materially expressed) on the intervening blank leaves.

Originally, Bradstreet might have imagined herself as the sole creator of the volume, but Simon's additions carry on a different version of that

unacceptable. I find it most likely that the final poem would have been copied onto an already bound leaf before Bradstreet's death. Otherwise, it is hard to account for the many blank leaves between it and the last entry by Simon.

²⁹ Idiosyncrasies in Bradstreet's hand are not to be confused with the marks of other hands that frequently replicate the number at the head of each meditation where latter-day readers have tested the points of their pens and the flow of their ink. The number "22," for example, morphs into a full numerical sequence of "222345678910." To me, these "pen trials," in many different hands, suggest not disregard for the manuscript object but attentive and recurring readership over time.

³⁰ The pen strokes do not otherwise strongly suggest multiple writing sessions, but it is unlikely that Bradstreet would write almost forty pages in one sitting anyway. And even a single writing session might require the writer to stop and sharpen the tip of her pen.

original work. Bradstreet's prefatory note to her son is the only dated text in her own handwriting, and so we cannot say precisely when the final poem or even the seventy-seven Meditations were composed in relation to each other. The ordering and bookending suggest a particular chronology, but biographical experience and manuscript articulation of time, though coordinated through their order in the volume, do not necessarily coincide so neatly. Simon's additions both complicate chronology (he copies in dated texts from long before the creation of the volume) and finalize it (the poems function as memorials, similarly to how the additions from manuscript sources do in the 1678 posthumous print edition of *Several Poems*). Copied from manuscript sources, each additional text realigns with the meanings created by its material presence and spatial relationship in the new manuscript (in the case of the Andover manuscript) or print object (in the case of the 1678 posthumous edition). Because none of the source material is extant, the attentive reader can only acknowledge that change has necessarily occurred in the transmission of texts. More broadly applied, shifts of meaning are always inscribed in acts of transcription and in the materiality of preservation and transmission. Artifacts such as the Andover manuscript highlight the complex fluidity of textual materiality. By contrast, print suggests fixity but, in a very important sense, might be better understood as a particularly pervasive variant of manuscript *unfixity*. That is to say, if one understands manuscript culture in all its complexity to be the dominant mode of puritan letters, then printed artifacts simply represent one version of the larger fluidity of the text. *The Tenth Muse* and *Several Poems*, in such a reading, are merely partial snapshots of the larger manuscript culture within which Bradstreet wrote.

Bradstreet's case provides a particularly compelling story of seventeenth-century authorship because she circulated at a time and in a society in which women's publication was rare. Importantly, her status as an *elite* woman first fosters her capacity to circulate and then predicts the survival of her paper trail in the archive over time. A close examination of Bradstreet's print and manuscript legacy, on the one hand, points to the unfixity of conventional categories of book history and print culture (two examples of fields that go far beyond their ostensible name designations) and, on the other hand, seeks to complicate generic categories to allow more texts (and therefore more voices) into the mainstream of puritan literary studies. An awareness of ways in which Bradstreet's archival traces are systemically privileged should also push students and scholars of American puritan literary history to account for the entire range of manuscript production in the period. Given the inherent bias of the

archive (what is saved, what is excluded, how material is or is not made accessible, who gets to determine meaning, relevance, and credibility), this work requires a recollection of all the nonextant works we know to have once existed, based on report and common practice: student essays and book annotations by Indigenous people; the lost work of Ann Yale Hopkins; learned tomes at the bottom of the ocean; elegiac lines moldering in coffins; papers lost in the shuffle of generation, accident, and systemic exclusion. Always to bear in mind the universe of manuscript practice and its intermediality is to grapple more productively with archival partiality and to commit to the hard work of seeking out the less easily recovered and interpreted record of voices across the full range of seventeenth-century media.

CHAPTER 14

Environment

Timothy Sweet

The puritan colonial project has famously been characterized as an “errand into the wilderness.” Perry Miller took the title of his influential study from a second-generation election sermon, Samuel Danforth’s *A Brief Recognition of New England’s Errand into the Wilderness* (1671). Regarding the title’s keywords, Miller says he followed Danforth “by stressing the ‘errand’ more than the ‘wilderness.’”¹ An environmental account of the puritan project might begin by reversing this emphasis to foreground the ideology embedded in the latter term.²

The first thing to recognize, of course, is that the land was not wilderness at all to the Algonquian-speaking peoples whom the English colonists encountered and displaced. Rather, it was home ground, some of which was planted in crops such as maize, beans, and squash, and some of which was managed in other ways, such as setting fires to create favorable environments for certain plants and game animals.³ When puritans encountered it in 1620 or 1630, however, much of the land would be described by a term closely related to “wilderness” in the puritans’ biblical lexicon: “waste.” While the two terms could be used more or less interchangeably in seventeenth-century environmental contexts, they had different connotations and implications. Etymologically, “wilderness” named

¹ Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper, 1964), 1.

² Tracing the mazy path from the seventeenth century to the modern valuation of “wilderness” as an aesthetic, emotional, and recreational resource is beyond the scope of this essay. A standard critique of the latter is William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. Cronon (New York: Norton, 1996), 69–90.

³ For an overview of New England’s environmental history from first human occupation to the present, see Richard W. Judd, *Second Nature: An Environmental History of New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014). On Indigenous American land management practices, see William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), especially 43–53; Charles C. Mann, 1491: *New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 350–366. I use “maize” throughout this essay because in the seventeenth century, “corn” could signify any grain.

a space for what it contained: *wilddēoren* (Anglo-Saxon for wild animals).⁴ Thus, in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford records the Pilgrims' first perception of New England as "a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men."⁵ "Waste" named a space for what was absent: human settlement and cultivation.⁶ Because epidemic disease had decimated as much as 90 percent of the Indigenous population in some coastal areas from 1616 to 1619, and because the English did not always recognize open woods (with the understory starting to revert by 1630) as the result of Indigenous land management practices, much of New England looked to them like waste or "void ground."⁷ Thus among the rationales that John Winthrop adduced for colonization, in a planning document entitled "Reasons to Be Considered for Justifying the Undertakers of the Intended Plantation in New England," was the argument that the English ought not "suffer a whole Continent, as fruitfull & convenient for the use of man to lie waste without any improvement."⁸

Miller's account was retrospective, taking the view of second-generation Jeremiahs such as Danforth as they confronted England's failure to notice the "City on a Hill" that their forebears had built. Yet among first-generation accounts of the purposes for colonization, scholars have argued, Winthrop's now familiar image from "A Model of Christian Charity" was anomalous and somewhat tangential to his purpose. Rather than intending the Bay Colony as a model of ecclesiastical polity to be imitated throughout Reformation Europe, emigrants were motivated by a desire to escape overpopulation and economic distress and to preserve a particular church form from God's impending punishment against England's corruption. Many expected to return to England when conditions permitted.⁹ As a rationale for the American location, puritan colonial theorists appealed to a

⁴ See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "wilderness," etymology.

⁵ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Modern Library, 1967), 62.

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, "waste," n. I.1.a, 2.

⁷ *The Planter's Plea* (London, 1630), in *Tracts and Other Papers Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America* (New York: Peter Smith, 1947), vol. 3, III, 14. Christobal Silva shows how English accounts of these epidemics obscured the presence of Indigenous agriculture and land tenure. Silva, *Miraculous Plagues: An Epidemiology of Early New England Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24–61.

⁸ John Winthrop, "Reasons to Be Considered for Justifying the Undertakers of the Intended Plantation in New England," in *Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America, 1580–1640*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 1995), 133–139 (135).

⁹ Theodore Dwight Bozeman gives a thorough critique in *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 81–119. Patricia Seed argues that the argument from overpopulation as a reason for colonization was more prevalent in England than in other European nations, likely because high unemployment looked like

biblically mandated vision of human ecology that was consistent with the conceptualization of New England as “waste” land. As Winthrop put it in his “Reasons,” “The whole earth is the lords Garden & he hath given it to the sonnes of men, wth a generall Condition, Gen: 1.28. Increase & multiply, replenish the earth & subdue it.”¹⁰

This sense that “god hath provided [New England] to be a *place of refuge* for many whom he means to save out of the generall callamitie” invites us to consider the puritans’ colonization project as a pastoral retreat.¹¹ Moreover, the first generation’s primitivist goal of purifying the church of post-biblical innovations – a goal enabled by a withdrawal from England and its impending “callamitie” – exemplifies William Empson’s familiar definition of “the pastoral process” as “putting the complex into the simple.”¹² “Pastoral” is a doubly valent term in the seventeenth-century context, however, understanding wilderness as both a sanctuary and a place of testing. As a literary and social structure of retreat from urbane corruption, pastoral positions wilderness as a site of refuge. Yet as a common term for Christian leadership, a structure in which the good shepherd safely guides his flock, pastoral positions wilderness as a site of danger and trial.¹³

While refuge supplied an important motivation for colonization, it could not supply the means of “environmental reform,” as the puritans understood the transformation of waste or wilderness into cultivated space.¹⁴ This effort was shaped, especially during the first generation, by

overpopulation. Seed, *American Pentimento: The Invention of Indians and the Pursuit of Riches* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 36–37.

¹⁰ Winthrop, “Reasons,” 135. The citation to Gen. 1:28 is prevalent in first-generation rationales for colonization, as for example John Cotton’s *God’s Promise to His Plantations* (1630) and John White’s *The Planter’s Plea* (1630).

¹¹ Winthrop, “Reasons,” 134–135, emphasis added. In his introduction to a modern reprint of Danforth’s sermon, A. W. Plumstead suggests that it can be read as a version of pastoral. See *The Wall and the Garden: Selected Massachusetts Election Sermons, 1670–1775* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1968), 49.

¹² William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950), 23. In emphasizing the first generation’s primitivist goal, I follow Bozeman. For more on this goal and how it shaped puritanism, see the Introduction to this volume as well as David D. Hall’s chapter on British Isles (Chapter 2).

¹³ Place of refuge and place of trial are two of the three biblical metaphors for wilderness discussed in Peter N. Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness: The Intellectual Significance of the New England Frontier, 1629–1700* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969). The third is place of religious insight.

¹⁴ The term is drawn from Cecilia Tichi, *New World, New Earth: Environmental Reform from the Puritans through Whitman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); on the Puritans, particularly Edward Johnson, see 37–66.

a belief in Eden as an actual historical place.¹⁵ Although the Fall had changed the nature of labor, God had created man “and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it,” and this original need “to till the ground” remained (Gen. 2:15, 2:5, KJV). Pastoral or Edenic imagery was thus supported by the georgic, a literary mode devoted to agriculture and, more generally, to environmental engagement through labor, as contrasted with pastoral’s emphasis on ease and refuge.¹⁶ The sense of pastoral retreat requiring georgic effort inevitably produced internal and external conflict. English agriculture was undergoing a transition as market incentives and individualist motives impinged on the tradition of moral economy.¹⁷ Thus Winthrop’s core message in his “Model of Christian Charity” was not the building of a model city but rather the promulgation of traditional moral economy’s social structure: “in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignitie; others mean and in subjection.” In order that “the rich and mighty should not eat up the poor, nor the poor and despised rise up against their superiors and shake off their yoke,” the body politic had to be “knit together” with “ligaments of . . . love.”¹⁸ In England, market-driven enclosures or other improvements displaced humble plowmen, thus provoking social unrest. In New England, similar market-driven measures resulted in territorial expansion that both strained the colonial body politic’s “ligaments” and resulted in wars and other conflicts with the Indigenous inhabitants. The colonial transformation of New England also involved factors beyond human labors and encounters, however, including the agencies of disease pathogens, old and new world animals and plants, and climate.

Tracing the transplantation of the English georgic tradition and its attendant pastoral imaginary within an environment shaped by interactions among various human and nonhuman agents, we will revisit a prominent narrative that pits an exploitative European stance against an

¹⁵ See Zachary McLeod Hutchins, *Inventing Eden: Primitivism, Millennialism, and the Making of New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 35–67.

¹⁶ The mode dates back to Virgil’s *Georgics* (29 BCE) and was revived in England during the era of agricultural improvement beginning in the late sixteenth century. For a more detailed discussion of the georgic dimension of the New England colonization project, see Timothy Sweet, *American Georgics: Economy and Environment in Early American Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 50–73.

¹⁷ See Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 9th ed., ed. Robert Levine et al., vol. A (New York: Norton, 2017), 178–189, quotations from 178, 183.

image of the “ecological Indian.”¹⁹ In so doing, we ought to recall that although English colonists and Indigenous New Englanders had very different assumptions and practices concerning human ecology, the modern image of the “ecological Indian,” derived from early accounts of Indigenous Americans as noble savages in such texts as Thomas Hariot’s *Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590) or Thomas Morton’s *New English Canaan* (1637), is itself a product of European pastoral. As Indigenous peoples changed their practices, for example, by hunting fur-bearing animals in greater numbers than they had traditionally done or adopting various European technologies or lifeways, they became no less Indian.

Another prominent narrative links modern environmental degradation to Christian ideology. In a frequently cited essay that is (interestingly in the puritan context) something of jeremiad, Lynn White, Jr., traced the roots of our present environmental crisis to Christianity’s triumph over paganism, which set all nature in service to man.²⁰ White’s thesis might seem to gain strong support from the millennial vision that emerged in New England beginning in the late 1640s, given millennialism’s emphasis on linear time leading to the end of the world (as is discussed later in this chapter).²¹ White also observed, however, that in contrast to its predominant, anthropocentric strain, Christianity bears an alternative tradition of humility regarding the natural world, modeled, for example, by St. Francis of Assisi.²² If the puritans had no St. Francis, they did have many who were environmentally sensitive, as, for example, Cotton Mather, who did not preach to the creatures but rather wanted to “hear the *Fishes* preaching to me, which they do many Truths of no small importance. As *mute* as they are, they are *plain* and *loud* Preachers; I want nothing but an *Ear* to make me a profitable Hearer of them.”²³ A committed millennialist by the

¹⁹ The idea that Native Americans always behaved as ecologically aware environmental actors is subjected to critical scrutiny by Shepherd Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: Norton, 1999); and Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis, eds., *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

²⁰ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 3–14.

²¹ For more on puritan millennialism, including a different view of what it was attempting and achieving, see Christopher Trigg’s chapter on millennialism (Chapter 16) in this volume.

²² The 2015 papal encyclical *Laudato si’* begins by invoking St. Francis and devotes three paragraphs to his example: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

²³ Cotton Mather, *The Christian Philosopher* (1721; Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facsimiles, 1968), 178. Compare paragraph 11 of *Laudato si’*.

time he wrote this passage, Mather's openness to the natural world here recapitulates a fundamental tension in the puritan attitude toward nature between asceticism and engagement.²⁴ This tension, no less than the more visible results of colonization, is part of the puritans' environmental legacy.

The Algonquians, like the English, labored on the land to produce life and culture. Yet many Indigenous economic practices, such as hunting and fishing, did not look like labor to the English, while those that did look like labor, such as farming, were carried out in different ways. Labor thus became a central category in English rationales for the expropriation of land. In his "Reasons to Be Considered," Winthrop drew on prevalent English assumptions when he argued that, historically, "Civill right" to the possession of land derived from an innovation on the first, "naturall" right of possession in common: "as men and cattle increased they appropriated certaine parcells of ground by enclosing, and peculiar manurance, and this in tyme gave them a Civill right." Because "the Natives of New England inclose noe land neither have they any setled habitation nor any tame cattle to improve the land by," Winthrop argued, they "have noe other but a natural right to those countries Soe as wee leave them sufficient for their use wee may lawfully take the rest, there being more then enough room for them & us."²⁵ There seemed to be "enough room" partly because of decimating epidemics; partly because, as Winthrop observed, the Algonquians did not maintain domestic animals; and partly because they practiced a forest-fallow agricultural system. They girdled trees, planted crops below to take advantage of the newly available light, moved on after several years as the soil became exhausted (although planting beans together with maize delayed the exhaustion by fixing some nitrogen), and returned years later when trees had grown up again and fertility was restored. Apparently ceding possession of old fields, the Algonquians seemed not to occupy much ground.

In describing the creation of landed property from what he perceived as a free commons, Winthrop assumed a step that John Locke would soon

²⁴ This tension in puritan literature might be mapped onto the dynamic of biophobia and biophilia, both of which seem to have evolutionary origins; on this dynamic, see Edward O. Wilson, *The Future of Life* (New York: Vintage, 2003), 129–148. On the development of Mather's millennialism, see Tichi, *New World*, 26–36, as well as Christopher Trigg's chapter on millennialism (Chapter 16) in this volume.

²⁵ Winthrop, "Reasons," 137.

theorize explicitly in *Two Treatises of Government*: the leap from property in objects to property in land. This step bore on frequent misunderstandings of land rights, tenure, and transfer in colonial contexts, for as scholars have pointed out, one of Locke's primary motives was to legitimate English colonialism.²⁶ Locke posits that in a commons condition, an object becomes property when one "mixe[s] his labour with, and join[s] it to something that is his own." He begins with the example of gathering acorns, easily applicable to pre-conquest North America, and moves through examples drawn from the European economy: "the grass my horse has bit; the turfs my servant has cut; the ore I have digged any place . . . The labour that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath fixed my property in them."²⁷ So far Locke says nothing about property in land, and so far this is roughly the view of property that the Algonquians held: a maize crop belonged to the family who planted, tended, and harvested it, with a certain portion going to a sachem, who then redistributed it.²⁸ That is, they understood access to land in terms of bundles of usufruct rights. In land transactions, they thought they were transferring only such usufruct rights to the English. By contrast, the English thought that a land sale meant the transfer of the land itself as an object that could theoretically be bounded to restrict access.²⁹ On this matter, Locke follows Winthrop and other first-generation puritans in appealing to the warrant of Genesis 1:28 for the abstraction of land.³⁰ As Locke puts it, "the chief matter of property being now not the fruits of the earth, and the beasts that subsist on it, but the earth itself; . . . I think that it is plain, that property in that too is acquired as the former." For "God . . . commanded [man] to subdue the earth, *i.e.* improve it for the benefit of life, and therein lay out something upon it that was his own, his labour. He that, in obedience to this command of God, subdued, tilled, and sowed any part of it, thereby annexed it to something of his own, that was his property, which another had no title to."³¹ Roger Williams, who frequently defended Native land rights, was one of the few colonists who seems to have understood the differences between English and Indigenous

²⁶ Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); Allan Greer, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires and Land in Early Modern North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 243–247.

²⁷ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 111, 112.

²⁸ On this redistributive economy, see Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, 40–43.

²⁹ See Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 58–69.

³⁰ On the likely influence of Winthrop, see Arneil, *Locke and America*, 140.

³¹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 113–114.

ideas of property. Having purchased from the Narragansett sachem Miantonomo the right to graze hogs on two islands, Williams had to correct Winthrop's assumption that the purchase gave him possession of the land, "for neither of [the islands] were sold properly, for a thousand fathom [of wampum] would not have bought either."³²

Not accumulating much by way of property in objects, beyond caches of maize that were buried for storage, and not possessing landed property on English terms by "improving" or enclosing it or raising domestic animals, the Algonquians could look lazy by puritan standards. Taking a georgic view, William Wood opined in *New England's Prospect* that since they clearly had "quick wits, understanding apprehensions, strong memories, with nimble inventions, . . . much might they benefit themselves, if they were not strong fettered in the chains of idleness; so as that they had rather starve than work, following no employments saving such as are sweetened with more pleasures and profit than pains or care" such as hunting and fishing, excepting the women, who were "very industrious" farmers.³³ Thomas Morton, by contrast, viewed this labor pattern through a pastoral frame in *New English Canaan*: "since it is but foode and raiment that men that live needeth . . . why should not the Natives of New England be sayd to live richly having no want of either"?³⁴ By the end of the seventeenth century, however, as colonization and accompanying environmental changes forced them into increasingly sedentary subsistence patterns that resembled those of the European peasantry, they had become recognizably poor.³⁵

Environmental transformation was rapid, enabled by imported disease pathogens, domestic animals, and European plants as well as the colonists' labor. We might understand the puritans' frequent attribution of all these causes ultimately to God's agency as not merely ideological but as their means of recognizing the overwhelming importance of nonhuman agents in the colonization process.³⁶ As the first generation's most environmentally aware chronicler, Edward Johnson, put it in *Wonder-Working*

³² Quoted in Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 61.

³³ William Wood, *New England's Prospect*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan (1634; Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), 96.

³⁴ Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (1637; New York: Arno Press, 1972), 56.

³⁵ See Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 101–105.

³⁶ Speaking of the agency of nonhumans in this way means understanding agency as action dissociated from intention and volition; see, for example, Bruno Latour, "Agency in the Time of the

Providence: "Thus hath the Lord been pleased to turn one of the most hideous, boundless, and unknown Wildernesses in the world in an instant, as 'twere . . . to a well-ordered Commonwealth, and all to serve his Churches."³⁷ What the puritans saw as the Lord's work was accomplished by many nonhuman as well as human agents.

The rapid transformation of "wild-woody wilderness" into a "mart for Merchants" seemed to take on an agency of its own as frontier expansion produced social fragmentation.³⁸ Bradford observed that with the Great Migration of the 1630s, "corn and cattle rose to a great price, by which many were much enriched and commodities grew plentiful. Yet in other regards this benefit turned to their hurt. . . . For now as their stocks increased and the increase vendible, there was no longer any holding them together, but now they must of necessity go to their great lots. . . . By which means they were scattered all over the Bay quickly. . . . And this I fear will be the ruin of new England, at least of the churches of God there, and will provoke the Lord's displeasure against them."³⁹ Johnson similarly warned that the "over eager pursuit of the fruits of the earth made some of them many times run out so far in this Wilderness, even out of the sweet sounds of the silver Trumpets blown by the laborious ministers of Christ, forsaking the assembly of the Lords people, to celebrate their Sabbaths in the chimney-corner, horse, kine, sheep, goats, and swine being their most indeared companions, to travel with them to the end of their pilgrimage."⁴⁰ This pattern of agricultural expansion onto new lands in pursuit of economic growth continued westward through the nineteenth century, often inciting commentary such as Johnson's that criticized frontier settlers as uncivilized.⁴¹

Domestic animals were key agents of environmental transformation and a key point of difference with Indigenous peoples. Miantonomo's accommodation of Williams's request to graze hogs notwithstanding, livestock often provoked conflict. The Algonquians were forced to fence their fields, as the colonists did, in order to protect their crops from cattle. Hogs, which ran wild and multiplied rapidly, sometimes interfered with the

Anthropocene," *New Literary History* 45.1 (2014): 1–18. On the agency of plants particularly, see Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World* (New York: Random House, 2001). For an overview of the impact of biological agents in the creation of the "neo-Europes," see Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³⁷ Johnson's *Wonder-Working Providence 1628–1651*, ed. J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), 248.

³⁸ Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, 210, 247. ³⁹ Bradford, *Of Plymouth*, 253–254.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, 253. ⁴¹ See Sweet, *American Georgics*, 50–121.

Algonquians' harvest of wild food, as Williams observed in *A Key into the Language of America*: "the *English* Swine dig and root . . . Clams wheresoever they come, and watch the low water (as the *Indian* women do) therefore of all the *English* Cattell, the Swine (as also because of their filthy disposition) are most hatefull to all Natives, and they call them filthy cut throats &c."⁴² Although some Algonquians in "Praying Towns" took up English-style cattle culture, for the most part livestock remained a source of conflict with the English. Casualties from the first battle of the Pequot War were nine colonists and twenty cattle.⁴³ Miantonomo's call for a pan-Indian alliance in the aftermath of the Pequot War, however, included a plan to "kill men, women, and children, but no cows" because cattle could be used for food "till our deer be increased again."⁴⁴

Beyond such instances of conflict, domestic animals transformed New England in two ways. They were central to the territorial expansion driven by economic growth, as Bradford and Johnson observed, as farmers produced surpluses for trade with recent immigrants or plantations in the sugar islands, where little land was reserved for food production. Moreover, in their interactions with indigenous and English plant species, domestic animals created new ecosystems. William Wood observed the transformation as early as 1634: "in such places as the cattle use to graze, the ground is much improved in the woods, growing more grassy and less weedy."⁴⁵ Some of this "improvement" in the expansion of pasture and meadow was due to the colonists' deliberate effort. John Josselyn, for example, noted in his 1674 chronicle of a voyage to New England that "Our English Clover-grass sown thrives very well."⁴⁶ Yet we should recognize the agency of plants and animals in these environmental transformations, as seeds were transported in shipboard fodder and initially distributed in cattle manure or brought by other means, and then flourished in a congenial environment. Numerous European plants proved to be invasive because they were ecologically better adapted than American plants to the landscape transformations produced by the European mode of farming and animal husbandry, such as forest clearing, close grazing, and more compacted soil. Relatively few American plants in turn colonized

⁴² Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, ed. John J. Teunissen and Evelyn J. Hinz (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 182, emphasis in original.

⁴³ See Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 175–208.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 163. ⁴⁵ Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 34.

⁴⁶ John Josselyn, *Colonial Traveler: A Critical Edition of Two Voyages to New-England*, ed. Paul J. Lindholdt (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988), 131, emphasis in original.

Europe. This lack of reciprocity remained largely unremarked, however, until the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ Seventeenth-century colonists were more intent, as Johnson remarked, on making New England's agricultural landscape into "a second England." Even before the *Arbella* arrived in 1630, William Blackstone had established an apple orchard on Beacon Hill from imported, grafted stock; the blossoms were pollinated by honeybees imported by John Endecott.⁴⁸

The landscape differed markedly from England's in important respects, however, even after woods had been cleared and crops and orchards planted. Colonists tended to use land extensively rather than intensively as they had done in England. A key difference was the primary food crop, maize. "Indian corn," as the puritans typically called it, provided subsistence at first but soon became a trade staple as well when northern Algonquians, such as the Abenakis, began to exchange furs for maize with the English, as they had traditionally done with southern Algonquians.⁴⁹ Maize was more easily grown than English grains such as wheat, which was attacked by the "blast" or black stem rust.⁵⁰ As the colonists learned to use maize as their primary grain, even brewing beer with it, they also learned that while it provided greater increase than European grains, it exhausted soil fertility more quickly.⁵¹ Fertility could be restored with animal manure, of course, but most manure was lost because animals were not typically confined in pens or barns for long periods. Alternatives included fish or wood ash, but for the most part, fertility was supplied only by the taking of new lands, a pattern that in effect scaled up the Indigenous forest-fallow system to unsustainable levels for the production of marketable surpluses.⁵² Colonization brought weeds as well as food and fodder plants. If these weeds annoyed farmers, they also made the ground seem more English. An extensive list of such "*Plants as have sprung up since the English Planted and kept Cattle in New England*" compiled in Josselyn's

⁴⁷ Timothy Sweet, "Global Cooperstown: Taxonomy, Biogeography, and Sense of Place in Susan Fenimore Cooper's *Rural Hours*," *ISLE* 17.3 (2010): 540–566; see 50–56.

⁴⁸ Michael Ziser, *Environmental Practice and Early American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 89–91.

⁴⁹ On the trade in maize for furs, see Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 94.

⁵⁰ Josselyn, for example, claimed that "*Wheat* many times changeth into *Rye*, and is subject to be blasted," *Two Voyages*, 131, emphasis in original. On problems with English grains, see Howard S. Russell, *A Long Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1976), 41–43.

⁵¹ On the adoption of maize, see Fulmer Mood, "John Winthrop, Jr. on Indian Corn," *New England Quarterly* 10.1 (March 1937): 121–133.

⁵² On soil fertility and exhaustion, see Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 150–153; Sweet, *American Georgics*, 51–52, 56–57.

New England's Rarities included numerous weeds, such as the broad-leaved plantain, "which the *Indians* call *English-Mans Foot*, as though produced by their treading."⁵³

The agency of climate is more difficult to assess than that of organic nonhuman actors such as disease pathogens, animals, and plants. We do know, however, that colonization took place during the Little Ice Age, a period of unusual global cooling from the mid-1590s to the early 1710s. Probable causes of the reduction in solar energy reaching the earth's surface during this era include fluctuations in the earth's orbital cycle, low sunspot activity, and increased volcanic activity. It is also possible that the rapid depopulation of the Americas resulting from the introduction of European diseases after 1492 contributed to the cooling, as regrowth of woodland vegetation drew down atmospheric carbon.⁵⁴ English clerics named a different nonhuman cause, attributing famines resulting from the unusual rains, cold winters, and late springs of 1594 and 1595, for example, to God's punishment for wickedness.⁵⁵ In any case, the unusually cold, wet conditions that ruined harvests throughout Europe in 1617 and 1618 may have contributed to the "grim and grisly face of poverty" that Bradford and company endured in Leyden and influenced their decision to emigrate.⁵⁶ Cold, wet summers and winters in the British Isles from 1624 to 1634 may have added impetus to the Great Migration. Perhaps William Wood had this weather in mind when he complained in 1634 of "the summer-winters and winter-summer of England" and observed that New England was both "colder in winter and hotter in summer," much "as England hath been in quondam times."⁵⁷ If Wood thought New England's more extreme climate was naturally congenial to the English, Johnson, by contrast, remarked an "admirable Act of Christ for this year [1632], in changing the very nature of the seasons, moderating the Winters cold of

⁵³ John Josselyn, *New-England's Rarities Discovered in Birds, Beasts, Fishes, Serpents, and Plants of that Country*, ed. Edward Tuckerman (1672; Boston: William Veazie, 1865), 137, 138, emphasis in original; accessed via archive.org.

⁵⁴ Sam White, *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe's Encounter with the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 21–24.

⁵⁵ Todd A. Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 120–121.

⁵⁶ Bradford, *Of Plymouth*, 16. On the bad harvests of 1617 and 1618, see Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 213.

⁵⁷ Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 31.

late very much, which some impute to the cutting down the woods, and breaking up the Land.”⁵⁸

The winter’s cold returned nevertheless. An untimely frost in 1635, which followed a drought in 1634, caused hunger among the Algonquians and contributed to the outbreak of the Pequot War.⁵⁹ In 1641–1642, Johnson saw some benefit in the “very sharp Winter” that “the Lord was pleased to send,” because Boston Harbor froze over, making it “passeable, both for horse, carts, and oxen.”⁶⁰ Yet that winter, the second coldest of the seventeenth century, saw hunger and hardship. In 1642, a late spring freeze “killed all their winter corn [English grains such as winter wheat and rye], and forced them to plant much of their Indian [maize] over.”⁶¹ These conditions, which affected the Algonquians as well as the English, may have contributed to Miantonomo’s motivations in forging a pan-Indian alliance against the English. The coldest winter of the century was 1675–1676, following the “year without a summer,” 1675, when crop failure likely figured significantly in Metacom’s decision to go to war against the English in King Philip’s War.⁶² Memorable passages in Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative from that war describe famine conditions among her captors. Rowlandson saw the Narragansett–Wampanoag Confederacy as mere tools of God’s punishment for the puritans’ sins, until they repented, at which point God “takes the quarrel into His own hand” and found “many [ways] to destroy” their adversaries.⁶³ Among these acts by God’s hand was the freezing over of the Great Swamp that protected an important Narragansett fort, which allowed the English to attack in December 1675, killing some six hundred and burning the fort.⁶⁴

Literal millennialists who hoped that the puritans were helping to bring in the New Earth and the New Jerusalem envisioned in Revelation 21:1–2 imagined the present world as temporary. Emphasizing this point,

⁵⁸ Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, 84. As Cronon observes, among the microclimate effects of deforestation is earlier snowmelt, which could give the impression of a shorter or warmer winter even if temperatures remained the same; see *Changes in the Land*, 123.

⁵⁹ Katherine Grandjean, “New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 68.1 (January 2011): 75–100.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, 207; Parker, *Global Crisis*, 450.

⁶¹ *Winthrop’s Journal*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer, 2 vols. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), 2: 57.

⁶² Parker, *Global Crisis*, 453.

⁶³ “A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson,” in *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, ed. Levine et al., 296.

⁶⁴ Parker, *Global Crisis*, 454.

Johnson's introduction to his history of New England's environmental transformation ends with a vivid apocalyptic vision: after a thousand years of peace on earth, "when you shall see great smoake and flames ascending on high, . . . and now for the great and bloudy Battell of God and Magog, Rivers of blood, and up to the Horse-bridles."⁶⁵ Millennialism thus posed in an acute way the central tension in the puritan relation to the nonhuman world: on the one hand, they were called to a necessary engagement with this world and its labors, pains, and pleasures, the domain of the flesh; on the other hand, they were called to turn away from this world to a higher world, the domain of the spirit.

The national-historical relinquishment predicted by millennialist theology had an individual counterpart as well. As Anne Bradstreet wrote in a letter of advice to her children, "my straying soul . . . is too much in love with the world," but with God's "correction" by means of illness or affliction, "yet will He preserve me to His heavenly kingdom."⁶⁶ Samuel Sewall negotiated this tension between worldly engagement and relinquishment using a pastoral structure in his millennialist text, *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica* (1697). Sewall begins by arguing at length that the coming battle with Gog and Magog would take place in New Spain and that the New Jerusalem would be sited in Mexico City, thus suggesting against localists such as Johnson that New England would rest safely at the margins. The concluding paragraph of the *Phaenomena*, now generally known as the "Plum Island Passage," presents a bucolic image of New England that harmonizes nature and culture:

As long as Plum Island shall faithfully keep the commanded post, notwithstanding all the hectoring words and hard blows of the proud and boisterous ocean; . . . as long as any cattle shall be fed with the grass growing in the meadows, which do humbly bow down themselves before Turkey Hills, . . . as long as any free and harmless doves . . . shall voluntarily present themselves to perform the office of gleaners after the barley harvest; . . . So long shall Christians be born there; and being first made meet, shall from thence be translated, to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, 60.

⁶⁶ Anne Bradstreet, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 257.

⁶⁷ *The Literatures of Colonial America*, ed. Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 323. This anthology's edition of the "Plum Island Passage" excludes the concluding quotation from Heb. 12:29 ("For our God is a consuming fire") that locates the passage in the *Phaenomena*'s millennial project.

This presentation of New England as a site of ongoing refuge for a community of “saints” thus revisited and revised the first generation’s project of pastoral retreat.⁶⁸

The tension between worldly engagement and relinquishment shaped puritan poetics.⁶⁹ Bradstreet’s “Contemplations” set the paradigm with its dramatization of what Perry Miller identified as the greatest temptation of the Augustinian strain of piety, the pantheistic identification of God with his creation.⁷⁰ In “Contemplations,” the beauty of the world (this is the first poem to register the glory of a New England autumn) evokes a pagan impulse to deify the world. Although the poet immediately counters this impulse – “Had I not better known, alas, the same had I” – the pattern of worldly engagement and relinquishment is repeated throughout: “Only above is found all with security.” In the final lines the reader is left to judge the success of the correction:

Nor wit nor gold, nor buildings scape times rust:
But he whose name is graved in the white stone
Shall last and shine when all these are gone.⁷¹

In so judging, the reader reflects on the difficulty of weaning spirit from its dependence on matter. A material conception of the soul at the resurrection, as figured in the verbs “last” and “shine,” indicates the magnitude of the struggle and a hope of comforting, familiar resolution.

The puritans developed other strategies for spiritually “improving” the natural world, by attending to wonders and portents or by understanding it emblematically.⁷² When “a very extraordinary Storm of Hail” struck Boston in April 1695, doing more damage to ministers’ houses than to others’, Cotton Mather took it as a portent, “enquiring what the meaning of God should be in it.”⁷³ More benignly, Bradstreet saw the flow of a river as an

⁶⁸ See Timothy Sweet, “‘What Concernment Hath America in These Things!’: Local and Global in Samuel Sewall’s Plum Island Passage,” *Early American Literature* 41.2 (2006): 213–240.

⁶⁹ Important studies of this tension are Robert Daly, *God’s Altar: The Word and the Flesh in Puritan Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); and Jeffrey A. Hammond, *Sinful Self, Saintly Self: The Puritan Experience of Poetry* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993). On Bradstreet and Edward Taylor, see also Ziser, *Environmental Practice*, 96–109.

⁷⁰ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), 15.

⁷¹ Bradstreet, *Works*, 205, 213, 214.

⁷² On wonders and portents, see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgement: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 71–116. On emblems, see Sweet, “Sewall’s Plum Island Passage,” 222–225.

⁷³ Sewall reported Mather’s question in his diary. See *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, ed. M. Halsey Thomas, 2 vols (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 1: 330.

emblem true of what I count the best,
O could I lead my rivulets to rest,
So may we press to that vast mansion, ever blest.⁷⁴

This habit of reading the natural world emblematically was systematized by Jonathan Edwards, who had found nature a site of spiritual contemplation from an early age when, according to his “Personal Narrative,” he “built a Booth in a Swamp, in a very retired spot, for a Place of Prayer” and “besides . . . had particular secret Places of [his] own in the Woods.”⁷⁵ In an unpublished work now generally known as *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, Edwards identified biblical types figured in universal natural phenomena: solar eclipses, for example, represented Christ’s death and resurrection.⁷⁶ This typological habit of perception could generate a sense of ecological connectedness:

The whole material universe is preserved by gravity or attraction, or the mutual tendency of all bodies to each other. One part of the universe is hereby made beneficial to another; the beauty, harmony, and order, regular progress, life, motion, and in short all the well-being of the whole frame depends on it. This is a type of love or charity in the spiritual world.⁷⁷

Like Bradstreet, Edwards wrote of a natural reluctance to turn away from the world’s beauty even though it bodies forth the superior “spiritual beauties” of a “preserver, benevolent benefactor, and a fountain of happiness” beyond this world.⁷⁸ Writing a century after Bradstreet, he integrated scientific advances such as Isaac Newton’s work on gravity, as the previous passage indicates, and optics.⁷⁹ Thus Edwards hypothesized that God presents the beauty of the world to us – “the wonderful suitableness of green for the grass and plants, the blues of the skie, the white of the clouds, the colours of the flowers,” and so on – through the “complicated proportion that these colours make with one another, either in their

⁷⁴ Bradstreet, *Works*, 211, emphasis added.

⁷⁵ Jonathan Edwards, “Personal Narrative,” in *Jonathan Edwards: Writing from the Great Awakening*, ed. Philip Gura (New York: Library of America, 2013), 681.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, ed. Perry Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 73.

⁷⁷ Edwards, *Images or Shadows*, 79. See John Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 64.

⁷⁸ Edwards, *Images*, 135, 136.

⁷⁹ Newton published his work on the mutual attraction of bodies, or gravity, in *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687). In *Opticks* (1704), he demonstrated that clear light consists of a multicolored spectrum.

magnitude of the rays, the number of vibrations that are caused in the atmosphere, or some other way.”⁸⁰

The trajectory of emblematic reading, which led from seeing the world as God’s book to finding a higher purpose, when severed from Christian doctrines such as original sin, became an important source of New England Transcendentalist philosophy and via that route influenced modern environmentalism. Scholars from Perry Miller on have traced a line of influence by way of natural theology from Edwards to Ralph Waldo Emerson.⁸¹ The chapters of Emerson’s foundational Transcendentalist text, *Nature*, ascend in progressively less material relations to the world from “Commodity” through “Beauty,” “Language,” “Discipline,” and “Idealism” to “Spirit.” This progression first separates and then reintegrates soul and world, rather than merely turning away from the world as Bradstreet had done. “The world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man,” writes Emerson. “It is a remote and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious. . . . It [the world] is therefore, to us, the present expositor of the divine mind.”⁸² Emerson’s famous Transcendental epiphany, in which he figured himself as a “transparent eye-ball,” followed the puritan turn from the world to God, but enacted a more extreme dissolution of the self and merger with the divine: “I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.”⁸³ Such moments of what Richard Poirier has characterized as “writing off the self” translated into practical consequences through Henry David Thoreau’s “aesthetics of relinquishment.”⁸⁴ Thoreau’s projects of voluntary simplicity and the decentering of the self in turn proved influential to such varied environmental writers as Aldo Leopold, Gary Snyder, Annie Dillard, and Wendell Berry. The puritan tension between worldly engagement and spiritual transcendence resonates in different ways in each of these modern writers.

⁸⁰ Edwards, *Images*, 135.

⁸¹ See Miller, *Errand*, 184–203; Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 152–163; and Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 128–129.

⁸² Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays*, ed. Larzer Ziff (New York: Penguin, 2003), 73.

⁸³ Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays*, 39.

⁸⁴ On “writing off the self,” see Richard Poirier, *The Renewal of Literature: Emersonian Reflections* (New York: Random House, 1997), 182–223. On Thoreau’s “aesthetics of relinquishment” and its environmentalist legacy, see Buell, *Environmental Imagination*, 143–179.

*Science**Ralph Bauer*

In December 1680, a great comet made its appearance in the northern hemisphere, eliciting curiosity, wonder, and terror wherever it was sighted. At the peak of its brilliancy on December 29, it had such an enormous tail that it was visible to the bare eye even during the day, stretching across the sky for a thousand miles, by some estimates.¹ Among the many stargazers who observed this natural spectacle in the winter of 1680 was the New England minister and soon-to-be president of Harvard, Increase Mather. "It was a terrible sight indeed, especially about the middle of December last, the stream of such a stupendous magnitude, as that few men now living ever beheld the like," he wrote in the Preface to *Heaven's Alarm to the World*, a sermon he had promptly delivered to his congregation on January 20.² There, he had warned his congregation that the comet was a sign of God's anger about New England's sins – pride, profaneness, a sense of security in worldly affairs, and iniquity, manifest especially in women dressing in the "Attire of an Harlot," their "lay[ing] out their Hair, and wear[ing] false Locks, their Borders, and Towers like *Comets*, about their heads." "I am persuaded," he wrote, "that God is about to open the windows of heaven, and to pour down the Cataracts of his Wrath" so that New Englanders might "be awakened out of all Security."³ In the following months, Mather grew obsessed with comets, reading every book on the subject he could find.⁴ When, in September of the following year, another comet appeared in the sky, Mather went to observe it firsthand with his

¹ See John Howard Robinson, *The Great Comet of 1680: A Study in the History of Rationalism* (Northfield, MN: Press of the Northfield News, 1916), 28.

² Increase Mather, *Heaven's Alarm to the World, or A Sermon, wherein is shewed that fearful sights and Signs of Heaven, are the presages of great calamities at hand* (Boston, 1682), and *The Latter Sign Discoursed of* (Boston, 1682), "To the Reader," n.p.

³ Mather, *Heaven's Alarm*, 37, 25.

⁴ See Michael Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 158–77.

two sons, Cotton and Nathaniel, through a three-and-a-half-foot telescope that had been brought over from England ten years prior and recently been gifted to the college at Cambridge.⁵ The following year, in 1683, Mather published the fruits of his labors, the *Kometographia, or A Discourse Concerning Comets*. Although he conceded, in accordance with the scientific consensus of the day, that comets proceeded from natural, not supernatural, causes, he insisted that their appearance, unlike that of planets, could not be predicted by mathematical reason and had to be interpreted as signs from an angry God portending great calamities and disasters.⁶

The experience of the two comets apparently made a great impression also on Increase's two sons, whose writings betray a lifelong interest in comets, astronomy, and science more generally. Thus, the same year, Cotton wrote about his astronomical observations in the almanac *The Boston Ephemeris* (1683), while Nathaniel, still an undergraduate at Harvard, published in the same almanac for 1685 a list of his own astronomical observations. In 1719, Cotton published a tract on the subject of the comets entitled *A Voice from Heaven*; in 1721, he devoted a chapter to the topic in his puritan manifesto on science, *The Christian Philosopher*. He also wrote *An Essay on Comets*, posthumously published in 1744.⁷

In the history of science, the comet that was seen from Boston in December 1680 would come to be known as "Newton's Comet" for providing the data that allowed Sir Isaac Newton to test and verify Kepler's theories of elliptical planetary motion, which led to the first comprehensive theory of a mechanistic universe, operating according to its own natural laws of gravitation: the *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687). The second comet, observed by the Mathers in September of 1682, would come to be known as "Halley's Comet," for it was this comet whose return Sir Edmund Halley predicted for 1758, based on the theory, developed in his *Astronomiae Cometiae Synopsis* (1705), that comets moved, like planets, on regular orbits. The patent interest that the New

⁵ Increase Mather, MS. diary (1680–1684), 87, the Mather Papers at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. See also Ronald Sterne Wilkinson, "John Winthrop, Jr. and America's First Telescopes," *New England Quarterly* 35.4 (December 1962): 520–523 (523).

⁶ Increase Mather, *Kometographia, or, A discourse concerning comets: wherein the nature of blazing stars is enquired into: with an historical account of all comets which have appeared from the beginning of the world unto this present year, MDCLXXXIII* (Boston: Por S.G. y J. Browning, 1683).

⁷ Nathaniel Mather, *The Boston Ephemeris: An Almanack of Cœlestial Motions of the Sun & Planets* (Boston: S. Green, 1954); Cotton Mather, *The Christian Philosopher*, ed. Winton Solberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); and Cotton Mather, *An Essay on Comets: Their Nature, the Laws of Their Motions, the Cause and Magnitude of Their Atmosphere, and Tails* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1744).

England divines took in the so-called Great Comets of the 1680s is noteworthy, for it sheds light on the important relationship between religion and the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century.

Religion and the Scientific Revolution

To some modern readers, accustomed to popular images of and ideas about puritanism, it may come as a surprise that there should be such a relationship at all. After all, the puritans are typically associated today with intolerance of new ideas as well as religious superstition, zealotry, bigotry, and even persecution – associations epitomized by the cultural memory of the Salem witch trials or the banishment of those, such as Anne Hutchinson or Roger Williams, who challenged clerical authority and the theocratic order in colonial New England. Cotton Mather, in particular, has often been portrayed as a witch-hunting radical religious zealot whose obsession with the devil clouded his sound reason during the Salem witch hunts.⁸ According to modern conventional wisdom, religion and science are antithetical to one another, and the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century became possible only when religion lost its tight grip on intellectual pursuits.

Yet historians of science and of New England intellectual life have long insisted on a close relationship between the histories of religion and science, particularly between the rise of puritanism and the Scientific Revolution.⁹ They have noted, for example, that among the advocates and practitioners of the New (Baconian) science in England, an over-proportional number were self-proclaimed puritans or had strongly puritan leanings. Also, in the British American colonies, puritan New England accounted for the vast majority of fellows to the Royal Society of London, the preeminent scientific organization in early modern England, created in 1660 in order to implement the program in “experimental philosophy” proposed by Francis Bacon during the first part of the seventeenth century.

⁸ Perhaps one of the strongest articulations of this notion is the biography of Cotton Mather written by Katherine Anne Porter, entitled *The Devil and Cotton Mather* (New York: Horace Liveright). The manuscript of the unpublished and unfinished biography is housed at the Maryland Room of the University of Maryland Libraries. See also David Levin, “The Hazing of Cotton Mather: The Creation of a Biographical Personality,” *The New England Quarterly* 36.3 (1963): 147–171.

⁹ On the relationship between the histories of science and religion in general, see Steven Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1210–1685* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006); Christopher Kaiser, *Toward a Theology of Scientific Endeavour: The Descent of Science* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); and Ralph Bauer, *The Alchemy of Conquest: Science, Religion, and the Secrets of the New World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019).

Thus, a total of eleven Fellows of the Royal Society hailed from New England (compared with only three each from Virginia and Pennsylvania and only one from the Carolinas).¹⁰ The New England Fellows included John Winthrop, Jr., the donor of Harvard's telescope, Increase Mather's son Cotton, and Thomas Brattle, the treasurer of Harvard who had used Winthrop's telescope to calculate the position of "Newton's Comet" and whose calculations were subsequently published by the printer John Foster and found their way to Newton, who in his *Principia* gave due credit to "the observer in New England."¹¹

The argument for the puritan origins of modern science has its roots in the work of the eminent German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), who, in his seminal *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) argued that, while previous religious movements striving to reform the Catholic Church had typically been inspired by an otherworldly asceticism that rejected temporal ambitions, the Protestant Reformation – especially the rise of Calvinism in sixteenth-century Northern Europe and of puritanism in seventeenth-century England – fostered the emergence of a modern capitalist work ethic. In particular, Weber argued, the puritan understanding of "election" – the notion that a believer's justification before God (or salvation) will have an outward sign such as superior moral conduct, the performance of good works, the attainment of wealth, or eminent social standing – gave rise to a "this-worldly asceticism" (*innerweltliche Askese*) that legitimated the engagement in commercial enterprise and the accumulation of wealth.¹²

Weber's influential argument about the sociological connections between religion and a capitalist economic order had a profound impact also on historians' understanding of other aspects of modern society, including that of science. Whereas previously the history of science had typically been told in terms of "progress" following on the heels of new discoveries, scholars now began to explain changes in scientific mentalities

¹⁰ See Dorothy Stimson, "Puritanism and the New Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century England," *Bulletin of Institute of History of Medicine* 3 (1935): 321–334.

¹¹ Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles*, trans. and ed. Florian Cajori, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), 2: 516. For Brattle's calculations, see John Foster, *MDCLXXXI. An Alchmanack* (Boston, 1681); Samuel Eliot Morison, "The Harvard School of Astronomy in the Seventeenth Century," *The New England Quarterly* 7.1 (1934): 3–24, 21; Michael Hall, *The Last American Puritan*, 159; and Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 241–242. Other New England fellows of the Royal Society included Roger Williams, William Brattle, Samuel Lee, and Charles Morton, the author of *Compendium Physicae*.

¹² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 2005); on "worldly asceticism," see 53–101.

and methods in terms of their sociohistorical contexts. Most prominent among these scholars of the sociology of science during the first part of the twentieth century was the American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910–2003), who, in 1938, published in the journal *Osiris* a three-hundred-page revision of his doctoral dissertation under the title "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England." This work was reissued as a book in 1970 and became one of the founding texts of the emerging field of the "sociology of science."¹³ Building on Weber's concept of "this-worldly asceticism," Merton elaborated what would come to be known as the "Merton thesis," which posited a correlation between the Protestant Reformation and the rise of modern experimental science. Although the particulars of the Merton thesis have been debated,¹⁴ Anglophone historians have generally accepted his premise of a close relationship between the Protestant Reformation and the rise of modern science, though they have expanded the range of methodological approaches well beyond sociology. For example, Peter Harrison has taken a humanistic approach and argued that the "major catalyst in the emergence of science" can be found in the "Protestant approach to the interpretation of texts," a literalist hermeneutics that undermined the allegorical reading of both the book of scripture and the book of nature, hereby facilitating "a new conception" of the world as understood by modern science.¹⁵

In this essay, I want to reconsider these arguments about the connections between puritanism and science in light of the interest in comets in puritan New England. While Anglophone historians of science have illuminated the important connections between religion and science in the early modern period, their insistence on seeing the origins of the modern (empirical) sciences exclusively in the context of the Protestant Reformation is at odds with an increasingly formidable body of recent scholarship that has highlighted the important contributions that the Catholic world also made to the history of modern science – whether it be in Renaissance Italy, imperial Spain, Spanish America, or the global

¹³ Robert Merton, *Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Work: Howard Fertig, 1970). See also Merton's programmatic *The Sociology of Science in Europe* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977).

¹⁴ Merton, *Science*, 115. On the history and legacy of the Merton thesis, see Bernard Cohen, ed., *Puritanism and the Rise of Modern Science: The Merton Thesis* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

¹⁵ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 8, 4.

networks of the Jesuits.¹⁶ Rather than rehearse the exceptionalist “puritan origins” thesis that has informed much of the Anglophone historiography of science, I therefore want to place the connection between religion and science in seventeenth-century New England in the broader context of the history of Christian metaphysics, the branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things. One of the theological tenets of puritanism that was, according to Merton, particularly decisive in the rise of modern science was the Calvinist notion of the immutable law of predestination. “The conviction in immutable law,” he wrote, “is as pronounced in the doctrine of predestination as in scientific investigation.”¹⁷ A closer look at the puritan writings about the Great Comets of the 1680s, however, suggests a different relationship between Calvinist theology and the rise of “experimental philosophy.” As we will see, what Calvinism contributed to the rise of experimental philosophy in the Anglophone context was the belief in the sovereignty not of God’s immutable laws but rather of his inscrutable will – the belief in his *providence*.¹⁸ In other words, it was not the determinism but the strong *voluntarism* of Calvinist doctrine that led to the rise of modern empiricism, including the breakdown of Ptolemaic cosmology and the ancient science of astrology, thus preparing the way for a new heliocentric and mechanistic understanding of the universe. But while Calvin became its most extreme exponent in the sixteenth century, voluntarism was hardly original to Calvinism or even Protestantism. It had

¹⁶ See Jaime Marroquín Arredondo and Ralph Bauer, eds., *Translating Nature: Transcultural Histories of Science in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); also David Freedberg, *The Eye of the Lynx: Galileo, His Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Victor Navarro Brotóns and William Eamon, eds., *Más allá de la leyenda negra: España y la revolución científica/Beyond the Black Legend: Spain and the Scientific Revolution* (Valencia: University de València, Inst. de Historia de la Ciencia y Documentación López Piñero, 2007); Juan Pimentel, “The Iberian Vision: Science and Empire in the Framework of a Universal Monarch, 1500–1800,” *Osiris*, 2nd ser., 15 (2000): 17–30; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Nature, Empire, and Nation: Explorations of the History of Science in the Iberian World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Antonio Barrera-Osorio, *Experiencing Nature: The Spanish American Empire and the Early Scientific Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006); Daniela Bleichmar et al., eds., *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Bleichmar, *Visible Empire: Botanical Expeditions and Visual Culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Bleichmar, *Visual Voyages: Images of Latin American Nature from Columbus to Darwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); and María Portuondo, *Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

¹⁷ Merton, *Science*, 109.

¹⁸ Thus, as R. Hooykaas has pointed out, if Calvinism was an important factor in the rise of modern empirical science, it was so “in a way precisely the reverse of that propounded by Merton”; R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 108.

a long tradition in the late medieval metaphysical Nominalism of Duns Scotus (1266–1308) and William of Ockham (1285–1347), a tradition that had inspired Catholic (especially Franciscan) reformers of the Catholic Church in what is known as the “First Reformation” long before Martin Luther or John Calvin, and that “First Reformation” continued to inform men of science in the early modern Catholic world. This is to say, in order to properly grasp the relationship between the histories of religion and modern science in western culture, we must see it in the context not of Protestantism but of the “Two Reformations” since the thirteenth century.¹⁹

Providence and Christian Metaphysics

As David Hall has pointed out, the most prominent feature distinguishing the seventeenth-century puritan understanding of the natural world from our own was the early modern belief in providence, the idea that everything that happened in the world was the direct manifestation of God’s will. As Hall also notes, however, the doctrine of providence does not originate with Luther or Calvin but had a long tradition in medieval theology.²⁰ Indeed, during the fourteenth century, it was especially prominent among the adherents of metaphysical “Nominalism,” the idea that abstract universals are but the creations of man, not of God. In elaborating this late medieval metaphysics, Nominalists such as Ockham hereby attacked the metaphysical “Realism” of the Thomists, the followers of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who subscribed to the notion that abstract universals were a part of God’s original creation and that metaphysics comprised a nested hierarchy of laws, in which natural law was understood as the participation of human reason in God’s eternal law.²¹ The Nominalists, by contrast, denied that God was bound by any law at all. For them, the phenomenological reality was simply the direct manifestation of God’s inscrutable and sovereign will. What could be experienced was simply what God willed, and God could will anything he pleased.²²

¹⁹ On the First Reformation, see Heiko Oberman, *The Two Reformations: The Journey from the Last Days to the New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 21–43; and Gordon Leff, *The Dissolution of the Medieval Outlook: An Essay on the Intellectual and Spiritual Change in the 14th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1976).

²⁰ David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 77.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 1334.

²² Roger French and Andrew Cunningham, *Before Science: The Invention of the Friars’ Natural Philosophy* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996); and Oberman, *The Two Reformations*.

The confrontation between the (mostly Dominican) Thomists, who bound God to eternal laws, and their (mostly Franciscan) Nominalist critics, who insisted on God's absolute free will, has come to be known in intellectual history as the *Wegestreit*, the battle between the Realist *via antiqua* and the Nominalist *via moderna*. This *Wegestreit* held important implications for the history of science. According to the Thomists, all reasonable men could begin with empirical observation and, by reasonable deduction (syllogism), arrive at supernatural truths, as though ascending a ladder based on a foundation of experience and constructed of steps of reasonable deductions. The Nominalists, by contrast, doubted the consistency between man's reason and metaphysics. As David Herlihy has put it, in the Nominalist understanding, "the human intellect had not the power to penetrate the metaphysical structures of the universe. It could do no more than observe events as they flowed. Moreover, the omnipotent power of God meant in the last analysis that there could be no fixed natural order. God could change what He wanted, when He wanted. The nominalist looked on a universe dominated by arbitrary motions."²³

In the fifteenth century, a new generation of influential Nominalist theologians such as Gabriel Biel laid the foundation for the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. As Heiko Oberman has argued, this tradition of metaphysical Nominalism was the modern "Harvest of Medieval Theology" inherited by Luther and Calvin during the sixteenth century and provided the theological armature also for puritan Reformers in their attacks on Aristotelian natural law metaphysics.²⁴ Though not exclusive to radical Protestantism, the voluntarism embraced by Calvin championed a scientific method of collecting phenomena as a record of God's providence unfolding in history. Thus, as Oberman has explained, this shift in the terms of metaphysical debate about the existence of universals represented also a decisive turn from the deductive to the inductive method in science, thus giving rise to a new understanding of what it means to "discover" something in the context of Europe's encounter with new worlds during the sixteenth century, leading to the rise of Baconian empiricism during the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century.²⁵

²³ David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 72.

²⁴ See Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

²⁵ Oberman, *The Two Reformations*, 8. On the transformation of "discovery" in European expansionism, see Ralph Bauer, *The Alchemy of Conquest: Science, Religion, and the Secrets of the New World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019).

But whereas Thomist natural law metaphysics was rejected by most of the Protestant Reformers and by many Catholic Nominalists alike in such important universities as those in Paris and Alcalá de Henares during the early sixteenth century, it saw a revival during the Counter-Reformation in the second part of the sixteenth century, especially by Catholic theologians and philosophers such as Domingo de Soto and Francisco Suárez, who reasserted the place of mathematical rationalism in natural philosophy. Thus, De Soto was famously able to demonstrate that, while the velocity of falling bodies is not constant but increases in the course of the fall, the *rate of acceleration* is regular and corresponds to laws apprehensible by mathematical reason.²⁶ His insistence on eternal laws, inherited from the Thomists, made his work in mathematical calculations possible. Both traditions, therefore, fed the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. Puritan theologians such as Mather objected not so much to the scientific premises of mathematical rationalism as to its mechanistic implications. It seemed to force God to observe eternal laws and decrees that seemed almost to preexist him. The Scientific Revolution, in other words, developed in relation to religion, and especially in relation to understanding how seemingly eternal laws discovered by human beings could be related to the sovereignty and free will of God.

From Astrology to Cometography: The New Sciences in Puritan New England

The intellectual history of comets played a significant role in these larger epistemic changes, in both the Catholic and the Protestant worlds. Despite the many new discoveries in geography and astronomy of the sixteenth century, most university curricula in the seventeenth century, including those at Oxford and Harvard, were still rather traditionalist, including their Scholastic science curricula based on Aristotelian physics and Ptolemaic cosmology.²⁷ According to Ptolemaic cosmology, the earth

²⁶ See William Wallace, *Domingo de Soto and the Early Galileo* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), esp. 113–129; see also Wallace, *Galileo's Logic of Discovery and Proof: The Background, Content, and Use of His Appropriated Treatises on Aristotle's "Posterior Analytics"* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1992).

²⁷ On science in Puritan New England, see Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England*, and on education, especially 242–247; and Morison, “The Harvard School”; also Raymond Stearns, *Science in the British Colonies of America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 117–161. William Newman has refuted Morison's contention that the Harvard science curriculum rejected Aristotelian matter theory in favor of the humanists and the “moderns” such as Bacon and Gassendi. In a close analysis of Michael Wigglesworth's dissertation, he shows that it is in fact

was the fixed center of the universe, surrounded by the nine concentric celestial “spheres” whose circular movements engendered the *Musica universalis*, or the *Music of the spheres*. Each of these spheres was the home to one of the celestial bodies: the inner seven to the planets; the eighth sphere, called the “firmament,” was home to the fixed stars; the ninth sphere, known as the *primum mobile*, was the invisible boundary to the tenth sphere, known as immutable empyrean, where God, the prime mover, dwelled in heaven. The study of the heavens was the province of astronomy and astrology, two branches of knowledge that have grown apart in modern times but were inseparable in Scholastic epistemology, constituting more or less a single “scientia” (branch of knowledge) to which every self-respecting medieval university had dedicated a chair, including the universities of Paris, Salamanca, Bologna, Pavia, Vienna, and Oxford.²⁸

While today astrology is seen as an esoteric branch of knowledge, in late medieval and early modern times, astrology was regarded, as Laura Ackerman Smoller has written, as “the most rational of science,” an integral part of mathematical astronomy in neoplatonic philosophy.²⁹ Whereas astronomy predicted the movements of celestial objects, astrology theorized their influence on the terrestrial world, which was understood to be linked to the stars through a series of occult correspondences and sympathies. Every planet has a certain quality that makes itself felt on earth and whose movements and conjunctions with other planets are connected to various aspects of human history. Jupiter, for example, is one of the two “benevolent and fortunate” planets and rules over the histories of faiths and religions in the world, called “laws” or “sects.”

Within the Ptolemaic conception of the world, however, the phenomena of comets stood outside the purview of the Scholastic science of astrology/astronomy. As comets appeared to be moving erratically through the heavens below the moon, there was little reason to study their path. Their behavior could be explained neither by mathematics nor by the

deeply informed by the late Aristotelianism of the medieval alchemists; see William Newman, *Gehennical Fire: The Lives of George Starkey, an American Alchemist in the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 20–50.

²⁸ Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Success and Suppression: Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 25; see also Benedek Láng, “Experience in the Anti-Astrological Arguments of Jean Gerson,” in *Expertus sum. L’expérience par les sens dans la philosophie naturelle médiévale*, Actes du colloque international de Pont-à-Mousson, 5–7 février 2009, ed. Thomas Bénatouil and Isabelle Draelants (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo-SISMEL, 2011), 309–321.

²⁹ Laura Ackerman Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: The Christian Astrology of Pierre d’Ailly* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 24.

Aristotelian elemental manifest qualities – hot, cold, dry, and moist. As such, comets were essentially “occult” phenomena, which is to say that they, like magnetism, were seen as preternatural and thus beyond the scope of Scholastic natural philosophy. They were unknown in fact and unknowable in principle. Instead, then, they were left to the province of theologians. Thomas Aquinas, in fact, had posited the idea that comets were used by God as special signs to communicate with man. As occult phenomena, comets could be understood both as the causes of natural occurrences, such as droughts, floods, or famines, and as divine portents intended for specific places or peoples.³⁰

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, a new brand of Neoplatonists who styled themselves as “occult philosophers” began to reject the distinction between the provinces of natural philosophy and theology that Thomist natural law metaphysics had drawn. The early modern heirs of medieval Nominalism, occult philosophers such as Cornelius of Agrippa and Paracelsus in the Holy Roman Empire and John Dee in Elizabethan England, began to subject occult phenomena to systematic inquiry. In the process, they initiated the gradual dissolution not only of the distinction between natural and divine law but also of the boundary between Scholastic (Aristotelian) “manifest” and “occult” qualities. Both were to be considered questions of science, and studied in the same way.³¹

This new attitude toward the occult also led to a new understanding of comets. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, several continental astronomers such as Paolo Toscanelli, Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Regiomontanus, and Girolamo Cardano began to subject the movements of comets to close observation, measurement, and detailed recording. They used empirical scientific observation to better understand the will of God, holding that comets could cause disastrous natural phenomena on earth. Even Newton, despite articulating the first comprehensive theory of a mechanistic universe, continued to be convinced that comets were

³⁰ Jane L. Lerviss, *Cometary Theory in Fifteenth-Century Europe* (Boston: D. Reidel; Hingham, 1985); Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Fabric of the Heavens: The Development of Astronomy and Dynamics* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965).

³¹ John Henry, *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 65. On occult philosophy, see Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923); Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge, 1979); Wayne Schumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Warburg Institute, 1958); and Walter Woodward, *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606–1676* (Chapel Hill and Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2009).

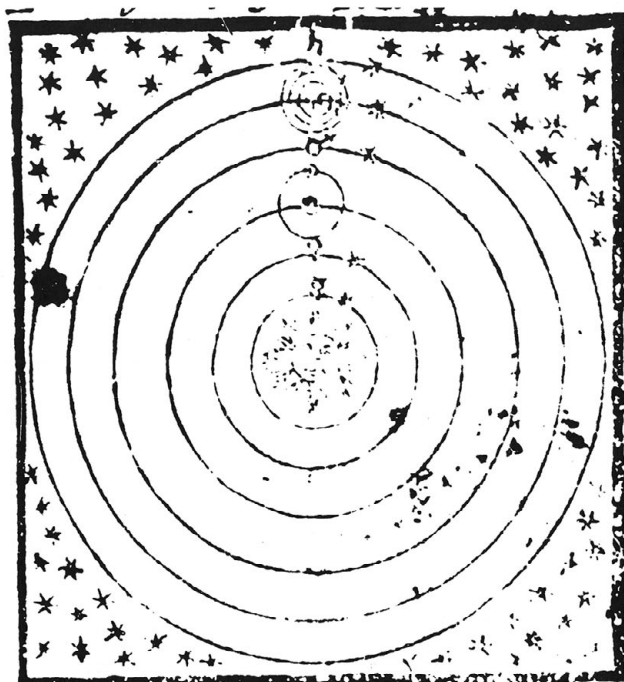
portents of God's providence, though the proven superlunary position of comets – where they could be seen simultaneously from many locations at great distances from one another – now made it more plausible that the announced calamities would be of a global or even cosmic, rather than a local, scale.³²

Seventeenth-century New England intellectuals were generally receptive to the new astronomical discoveries and heliocentric ideas, for they provided welcome evidence that to know God's will one had to study nature all the more closely. Natural phenomena were put before us not in order to elicit metaphysical speculations but to edify in the contemplation of their supernatural meaning as signs of God's providence. As a result, by the time the Mathers observed Halley's Comet in 1682, New England had already had a substantial tradition of writings about comets. Much of this literature can be found not in Latin textbooks of astronomy to be used in the formal curriculum of the university but rather in the vernacular genre of annual almanacs. Their authors were typically young Harvard graduates and tutors who were employed by the college yard printer to compile calculations of practical information useful in quotidian life, such as times of sunrise and sunset on a given day, as well as the projected occurrence of curiosities, such as eclipses of the sun or the moon. The space not taken up by the calendric tables was filled with poems and short scientific essays. These New England writers about comets had adopted the first English treatise on the new Copernican astronomy, Vincent Wing's *Astronomia Instaurata* (1656), and eagerly disseminated the idea of a heliocentric universe in print (see Figure 15.1).³³ For example, when Zechariah Brigden received the assignment for writing the annual almanac for 1659, he included an essay in which he discussed the ideas of Kepler, Galileo, and Gassendi (among others) and gave a brief outline of Copernican theory, which he called "the true and genuine Systeme of the world." As far as the obvious contradictions between Copernican theory and Scripture were concerned, he wrote that the latter should not be taken too literally and that God often resorted to parables in order to make himself understood to the common people.³⁴ Two years later, the

³² See Charles Weber, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

³³ See Morison, "The Harvard School"; M. Hall, *The Last American Puritan*, 161–163; and Rose Lockwood, "The Scientific Revolution in Seventeenth-Century New England," *The New England Quarterly* 53.1 (1980): 76–95.

³⁴ Zechariah Brigden, *An Almanack of the Coelestial Motions for This Present Year of the Christian Aera 1659*, reprinted in Samuel E. Morison, "The Harvard School of Astronomy in the Seventeenth



Time tryeth Truth Convicting all that strive
 Fain Systems, dead Chymæraes to revive,
 And he hath brought to light by good success
 The Law which nature never doth transgress.
 Sol keeps his throne, and round about him shines
 Vpon six worlds which walk in single lines,
 And eight less Globes, again encompassing
 One th' *Earth*, four *Jovis*, Three *Saturn* with his Ring:
 Alling their Maker's Praise, and shew his power
 In due proportion moving every hour.
 Thrice happy they that leaving wandring wayes
 Due duly walk to their Creators praise

T. S.

Figure 15.1 "The Copernican System," John Foster's almanac, 1681.

Century," *The New England Quarterly* 7.1 (1934): 3–24 (9–12); for a discussion of these endeavors, see also Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England*, 246–247; and Stearns, *Science*, 117–161.

Bostonian Samuel Cheever wrote an almanac where he presented a month-by-month forecast of the celestial phenomena expected for the year, complete with astronomical and calendric tables showing the time of the rise and set of the various celestial bodies. At the bottom of each monthly table, he presented a poem about the stars or plants derived from classical mythology and lore. The track ends with a "Brief Discourse of the Rise and Progress of Astronomy," which begins with a discussion of Ptolemy and ends with Galileo, Kepler, and Gassendi.³⁵ When Alexander Nowell, a tutor at Harvard, published his *Almanack of Coelestial Motions* in 1665, he omitted the poetry from the monthly forecasts but also included a final discourse entitled "The Sins Prerogative Vindicated." The tract ends with a section on comets in which he asserts that comets "proceed from natural causes" but have "preternatural effects."³⁶ Thus, as Samuel Eliot Morison has observed, the "new astronomy, which had to fight the church and the clergy in almost every other country, was accepted by and even propagated by the clergy in New England," as "clergymen like the Mathers were the chief patrons and promoters of the new science."³⁷

However, while most of the New England writers accepted the "new science" of a heliocentric universe, they were ambivalent about the speculations, made by some of their European contemporaries, that comets moved according to laws that could be mathematically described and that the occurrence of comets could thereby be predicted. Although the New England divines were firmly committed to Baconian empiricism, they rejected the new rationalist impulse, which privileged mathematical reason over the "naïve" empiricism of much scientific thinking during the first part of the seventeenth century.³⁸ This was apparent as early as the publication of Samuel Danforth's *An Astronomic Description of the Late Comet or Blazing Star, with a Brief Theological Application Thereof* (1666), a tract about the comet of 1664. The first part provided a summary of scientific knowledge about comets, including the various ways in which

³⁵ Samuel Cheever, *An Almanack for the Year of Our Lord 1661* (Cambridge, 1661).

³⁶ Alexander Nowell, *An Almanack of Coelestial Motions for the Year of the Christian Epocha 1665 ... Fitted for Longitude 315. Gr. and 42. Gr. 30. M. of North Latitude* (Cambridge, MA: Printed by Samuel Green, 1665).

³⁷ Morison, *The Intellectual Life*, 247–248. See also Ronald S. Wilkinson, "John Winthrop, Jr. and America's First Telescope," *New England Quarterly* 35 (1962): 520–523; and Stearns, *Science*, 120, 130, 148–152.

³⁸ On the late seventeenth-century challenge of "naïve empiricism" by the "New Philosophy," see Peter Dear, "Totius in verba: Rhetoric and Authority in the Early Royal Society," in *The Scientific Enterprise in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Dear (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 255–272; also in the same volume, see Lesley Cormack, "'Good Fences make Good Neighbors': Geography as Self-Definition in Early Modern England," 64–85.

astronomers calculated the size and the parallax of comets. The second part, the “theological application,” begins with various Scriptural quotes and then offers a history of comets in “former ages [that] do abundantly testify that Comets have been many times Heraulds of wrath to a secure and impenitent world.”³⁹

Danforth’s tract provided much of the historical information for Mather’s *Kometographia* twenty years later. Like Danforth’s tracts, and unlike the quotidian almanacs, Mather’s *Kometographia* aimed to offer an edifying “historical account of all the comets which have appeared from the beginning of the world unto the present.”⁴⁰ His purpose was not to give scientific descriptions or measurements of comets but to link every recorded instance of a comet to subsequent calamities in human history. It was hereby intended not for an expert but for a popular audience. Thus, he writes that the purpose of his tract was “to inform and edifie the ordinary sort of Readers,” adding only “some things of the nature, place, motion of Comets, which only such as have some skill in Astronomy can understand.” For this purpose, he had “perused what Books I could meet with, which might be helpful to me in this undertaking,” including “Kepler, Hevelius and Ricciolus.”⁴¹ Yet his method suggests the influence of the Baconian epistemology propagated by the Royal Society of London twenty years earlier: the collecting and cataloguing of empirical phenomena.⁴² His *Kometographia* hereby follows the method laid out in Bacon’s *Sylva sylvarum* of providing as complete and comprehensive an accumulation of data and histories (i.e., narrations) as possible. Accordingly, he begins with a brief theoretical discourse on scientific opinions on comets but then embarks on a narrative history of all the comets of which he was able to learn from the Bible as well as from the history books and chronicles. Each appearance of a comet is then shown to precede some human catastrophe – wars, epidemics, or persecutions (even though at times the portended calamity could follow behind the comet by a couple of years). As to the idea – proposed by some seventeenth-century thinkers – that there have also been “happy comets” (such as the one foretelling the birth of Christ to the magi or the one foretelling Nero’s death), Mather admits it for exceptional cases but not as a rule. The point, however, is that

³⁹ Samuel Danforth’s *An Astronomic Description of the Late Comet or Blazing Star, with a Brief Theological Application Thereof* (Cambridge, 1666), 20.

⁴⁰ Mather, *Kometographia*, title page. ⁴¹ Mather, *Kometographia*, “To the Reader,” n.p.

⁴² On the connections between the Mathers, especially Increase and Cotton, and the Royal Society, see Stearns, *Science*; and Morison, *Intellectual Life in Colonial New England* and “The Harvard School.”

in pursuing knowledge of God's will, Mather embraced new scientific methods of collection and observation – a method Mather applied well beyond comets into all manner of natural and historical phenomena.

Yet, as Mather was aware, a new rhetoric of science was gaining ascendancy in contemporary European natural philosophy that did not support his providentialist interpretations of comets. In 1678, for example, the secretary of the Royal Society, Robert Hooke, had published his *Lectures and Collections*, which he had made on occasion of the comet of 1677 and in which he speculated that comets moved on orbits, not in a straight line (as Tycho Brahe and Kepler had thought) and that their movements could thus be proven to follow mathematical laws by means of which it would be possible to predict their appearance. Robert Middlekauff has argued that the difference between Mather and the “learned men” of the Royal Society such as Hooke was that the former's empiricism stopped short of the latter's: “The evidence of the senses did not carry Increase as far as it did Hooke.”⁴³ In fact, however, Mather's arguments, here and elsewhere, are consistently based on empiricist rhetoric. With regard to comets, for example, he argues: “The *experiences* of many Ages doth bear witness to the truth of this Doctrine. If the Scripture were silent about this matter, the *Experience* both of former and later Ages doth sufficiently and sadly confirm the Truth in hand. Hence an heathen Writer could say, if God be about to punish a City or a Nation, He is wont first to give warning of it by Prodigies, by Signs from heaven.”⁴⁴ What was at issue in the controversy about the significance of comets between Mather and some of his contemporaries in the Royal Society was the validity not of an empiricist approach to knowledge but rather of how to interpret the empirical evidence supplied by the senses and the accumulated record of human experience. As Mather understood very keenly, it was the new rationalism in science, not Baconian empiricism, that threatened both the free will of God and the political authority of the colonial theocracy. How could the idea of a world operating according to its own natural laws – comprehensible and predictable by man – be reconciled with the idea of the sovereignty of God's *concursus* – that every aspect of existence was sustained only by the will and pleasure of God? As Mather therefore asserted in his *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, “There are Wonders in the Works of Creation as well as Providence, the reason

⁴³ Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596–1728* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 142.

⁴⁴ *Heaven's Alarm*, 13; my emphasis.

whereof the most knowing amongst Mortals, are not able to comprehend.”⁴⁵

The controversy surrounding the providential significance of comets thus turned on the larger question of the relationship between the visible and the invisible world and, thereby, on the theological implications for the New England concept of “visible sainthood,” which was based on the assumption of a basic continuity between the visible world of appearances and the invisible world of essences, whether they be natural or supernatural. This “specular” relationship between the visible and the invisible world in Baconian empiricism underwrote the puritan notion of a continuity between sanctification and justification, the idea that visible phenomena reflected or mirrored the order of the invisible world that lay behind the world of appearances. The New English theological notion of “visible sainthood” had repeatedly been under attack throughout the seventeenth century – both from without on the “conservative” end after the Restoration and, even before, from within the radical side since the theological and political disputes that had almost torn the colony apart during the Antinomian Controversy of 1637. If the concept of visible sainthood had nevertheless survived all the theological and political challenges that it confronted from the inside and outside during the course of the century, it increasingly came under pressure in the debate about comets during the 1680s and finally collapsed in the aftermath of debates about the use of “spectral” evidence in the Salem witch trials, which was, in effect, the “negative” to the debate about “visible sainthood” in the larger question of the relationship between the visible and the invisible world.⁴⁶

Thus, at the same time as empirical knowledge played an increasingly important role in New England’s political authority, it became the subject of skepticism in the wider scientific networks of the Atlantic world, particularly with the advent of Newtonian physics, which subordinated first-hand experience to mathematic rationalism. In the “cool mood of Restoration England,” David Hall notes, Anglicans and scientists renounced the providentialist interpretation of a preternatural phenomenon; instead, a “medical interpretation of ‘enthusiasm’ came to prevail” and “an interpretation tracing it [a wonderous appearance] to merely

⁴⁵ Increase Mather, *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, ed. James Levernier (Delmar, NY: Scholars and Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977), 109.

⁴⁶ On the relationship between the visible and invisible world, between science and religion, in early modern puritan New England, see Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, 2011).

natural factors.”⁴⁷ Even in New England itself, the “specular” relationship between the visible and the invisible world upheld in the scientific tracts of Mather and Danforth was challenged by the new rationalism imported by recent arrivals from Europe, such as Charles Morton, a minister with an interest in science who had written a textbook on science entitled *Compendium Physicae* in which he challenged the idea that comets and eclipses portended evil and ascribed to them exclusively natural causes. By contrast, when in 1721, Mather’s son, Cotton Mather, published yet another tract on comets, *An Essay on Comets*, he acknowledged that comets “naturally follow the Keplerian Principals” as well as Halley’s “Calculations, upon which he ventures to foretell the Return of Comets” but nevertheless insisted that comets were “Ministers of Divine Justice.”⁴⁸

Still in the nineteenth century, the “awful hieroglyphics” of extraordinary celestial spectacles captured the fascination of Nathaniel Hawthorne for their poetic possibilities. Although his cool-minded, rationalist narrator in the *Scarlet Letter* dismisses the long New English tradition of interpreting such events (in this case, meteors) “as so may revelations from a supernatural source,” it is the light of the nightly celestial visitors, “burning duskily through a veil of cloud,” that “imparted a new expression” on the human beholders, the puritan minister Arthur Dimmesdale, his secret lover Hester Prynne, and their child Pearl, reminding the minister “of the day of judgment” and leaving him with an “effect as if the street and all things else were at once annihilated.”⁴⁹ In Dimmesdale, Hawthorne understood the puritan impulse to scientific empiricism: a closer study and observation of nature could reveal the will of God and the workings of the soul.

⁴⁷ See D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 106.

⁴⁸ Cotton Mather, *An Essay on Comets, Their Nature* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1744), 4, 7.

⁴⁹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ed. Ross Murfin (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2006), 127–128.

*Millennialism**Christopher Trigg*

According to the Second Epistle of Peter, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” Then, a cosmic inferno will consume the celestial sphere and incinerate our planet. Following this fearsome judgment, God will establish “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:10–13). This passage, together with other key eschatological (i.e., end-times) texts from Daniel, Isaiah, Revelation, and a host of classical pagan and Jewish prophecies, encouraged generations of puritan clergy and laypeople to anticipate the imminent destruction of the present world and its replacement with a revised and improved edition. Many (though far from all) took the second part of the Epistle’s prediction literally, determining that the earth would be visited by a cleansing fire that they knew as the “Conflagration.” There was considerable disagreement, however, as to the timing and scope of this event. Some believed that it would take place only after a thousand-year period of growing religious purity and discipline across the world. Others expected it to ignite at any second, heralding the personal return of Christ from heaven and the establishment of a new order of creation, cleansed of sin and death itself. Many accounts limited the range of the Conflagration, confining it to the lands around Rome, the seat of the Catholic antichrist, or else to the three continents of the Old World. Still others insisted that it must consume the entire fallen planet, either instantaneously or gradually.

Current scientific consensus on global warming suggests that this last group may have been onto something. Yet from a modern, secular perspective, puritan millennialism seems to be a retrograde system of thought, largely – or entirely – antithetical to intellectual and scientific progress. At best, Christian apocalypticism of all kinds necessitates a gross simplification of the complexities of human and natural history and reflects a naïve desire for their redemptive transcendence. At worst, it cultivates dangerous apathy and ignorance about the political questions of our time or encourages direct, destructive intervention in them. A 2016 survey by the Yale

Program on Climate Change Communication found that “[j]ust over one in ten” Americans believe that “we don’t need to worry about global warming” because “the end times are coming.”¹ Half a century on from the publication of Hal Lindsay’s *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), the various conflicts in the Middle East are still the focus of eager eschatological speculation among many evangelicals. A sense of America’s own millennial destiny, meanwhile, underpins the totalizing conspiracy theories advanced by the far right.

For Mark Lilla, the persistence of apocalyptic and millennial thinking in modern politics is indicative of a failure to live up to the promise of “the Great Separation” – the disconnection of political authority from the divine proposed by Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and other Enlightenment philosophers. The principles of the United States’ founding documents, Lilla insists, are premised on this separation (“it is the consent of ‘We, the People’ that alone renders the Constitution legitimate”).² Nevertheless, he suggests that the nation is particularly vulnerable to the emergence of new forms of “political theology,” largely because “American political rhetoric, which owes much to the Protestant sectarians of the seventeenth century, vibrates with messianic energy” and often trades in “fantasies of historical inevitability” that divert attention from the contingent, “unpredictable” way in which the world really works.³

Does American puritan literature conform to Lilla’s stereotype? Some of the best-known pieces from colonial New England do indeed describe the disruptive, destructive, and redemptive intrusion of the eschaton (the end time) into a world mired in sin. This scenario is perhaps most powerfully brought to life in Michael Wigglesworth’s “The Day of Doom” (1662), a narrative poem that sold unusually well for a seventeenth-century colonial American text.⁴ There, “carnal” men and women are woken at midnight by an ominous light that turns the dark to day, when God begins “to pour / Destruction the world upon / In a tempestuous shower.”⁵ Though they seek to “hide themselves in caves and delves / In places underground,”

¹ Connie Roser-Renouf, Edward Maibach, Anthony Leiserowitz, and Seth Rosenthal, *Global Warming, God, and the “End Times”* (New Haven: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 2016), 5.

² Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* (New York: Vintage, 2008), 315.

³ Lilla, *Stillborn God*, 314, 306, 305.

⁴ David D. Hall, *Ways of Writing: The Practice and Politics of Text-Making in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 117.

⁵ Michael Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom; or, A Description of the Great and Last Judgement with a Short Discourse about Eternity* (London, 1666), 1, 2.

there is no escaping divine justice.⁶ The global political establishment – “Earths potentates and powerful states” – is swiftly overturned, as Christ sends to hell all those who lack saving grace (including those who, having “dy’d in infancy . . . never had or good or bad / effected personally”).⁷ Anne Bradstreet’s “Dialogue between Old England and New” (1642) focuses more closely on this political dimension of the apocalypse. This poem casts the puritan “Mother” country as an ailing old dame, gravely wounded by the recent Civil War, a conflict occasioned, she explains, by a struggle to preserve both the “law” and the “Gospel” against a crypto-Catholic faction in the Church of England.⁸ Her “Daughter,” New England, reassures her that if these bishops are stripped of their power, the country will know “Peace, . . . wealth, and splendour” once more.⁹ She then prophesies that the reunited nation will help to bring about the end of the present world order, as English armies defeat Catholic Rome and then the Muslim Ottoman Empire, preparing the way for the conversion of the Jews to Christianity and a millennium “of happinesse and rest.”¹⁰ At the close of the puritan period, Jonathan Edwards’s widely anthologized revival sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741) warns its audience not to let slip an “extraordinary Opportunity” to turn to Christ, since “God seems now to be hastily gathering in his Elect in all Parts of the Land; and probably the bigger Part of adult Persons that ever shall be saved, will be brought in now in a little Time.”¹¹ In his account of the extraordinary religious awakenings that broke out across New England in the early 1740s, Edwards wondered whether he was witnessing the “dawning, or at least a prelude, of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which . . . shall renew the world of mankind.”¹²

But focusing exclusively on texts of this sort produces an incomplete picture of American puritan millennialism. Authors who anticipated the end times in their writings were concerned not only with the ruination of this world but also with the construction of the next one. Rather than simply presenting the millennium as a transcendent solution to the vagaries of human existence, they used their inquiries into the future kingdom

⁶ Wigglesworth, *Day of Doom*, 5. ⁷ Wigglesworth, *Day of Doom*, 4, 46.

⁸ Anne Bradstreet, “Dialogue between Old England and New,” *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America* (London, 1650), 180, 186.

⁹ Bradstreet, “Dialogue,” 180, 189. ¹⁰ Bradstreet, “Dialogue,” 190.

¹¹ Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (Boston, 1741), 23, 25.

¹² Jonathan Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival of Religion in New England* (1742), in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 353.

of God to extend and develop a variety of religious, philosophical, scientific, and political questions about life on earth. For instance, thinking about the resurrected bodies that would populate the planet during the millennium allowed Cotton Mather to assess recent work on race, gender, medicine, and physiology. Similarly, Thomas Prince's investigations into the physical processes by which the fallen world would be made fit for a higher form of living were premised on the latest geographical and astronomical theories.

The exploratory impulse of this kind of literature was facilitated by the belief that it was impossible to attain a full understanding of the world to come in the present dispensation. Millennial writings were therefore granted a degree of latitude unthinkable in other areas of theology. Like the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith on which its doctrinal positions were based, the 1648 Cambridge Platform that established American puritan theological and ecclesiological orthodoxy was silent on the thousand-year rule of resurrected saints prophesied in Revelation 20:4. As a result, the clergy and laity were able to offer a diverse range of competing interpretations of that millennium. Proponents of these different views did not form up into factions, but keenly (and respectfully) debated their divergent interpretations of scripture, prophecy, and history. By swapping papers, holding conferences, and publishing sermons and tracts correcting each other's mistaken views, they hoped to disseminate a more accurate picture of the things to come, and thereby cultivate on a smaller scale the spirituality, unity, and learning that the millennium would spread around the globe.

This chapter will center around the writings of three key puritan authors who participated together in this exchange of millennial ideas. Minister Thomas Prince attended several conferences on the subject organized by Cotton Mather and generally followed his senior colleague's opinions quite closely. Magistrate Samuel Sewell frequently discussed eschatological prophecies with Mather, although he disagreed with significant aspects of his friend's later position, especially Mather's rejection of the premillennial conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity. All three were linked, however, by their willingness to push eschatological thought to its limits. In common with earlier generations of American puritans, they conceived of the millennium in terms of the victory of the church, the triumph of God's chosen saints over the devil and his allies. But they were also curious about the fate of life itself. How would human experience be altered by and during the millennium? What kind of political groupings would people be organized into? What would the resurrected human body

look like? Would its skin be transparent, luminescent, or opaque? Would it admit of distinctions of gender or ethnicity? Would it require organs of digestion or of propagation? Mather and Prince, in particular, were also preoccupied by the transformation of the earth itself, by the material causes of the Conflagration, and the biological and physical transformation of the planet that would follow in its wake.

Acknowledging the importance of issues such as these for Mather, Prince, Sewell, and others obliges us to reconsider the modern tendency to view millennialism as an intellectual dead-end. Since these authors expected their predictions to come true (in broad outline at least), it is not quite accurate to describe their work as a kind of science fiction. Nonetheless, their millennial speculations fulfilled a function analogous in many ways to that which the genre performs today: presenting visions of possible futures intended to stimulate intellectual and ethical debate about the present. Furthermore, Mather and Prince also anticipated the extra-terrestrial and posthuman compass of modern science fiction. As we shall see, they were prepared to accept the possibility that life on this earth was not universally paradigmatic, that other forms of rational being were already out there or would be created in the fullness of time.

For a number of reasons, the most fitting starting point for this survey of speculative puritan millennialism is the work of Cotton Mather. Not only did Mather produce more eschatological material than any other colonial American author, but the changing scholarly perception of his writing has been critical to the ongoing reassessment of puritan eschatology. In a series of articles and chapters that helped to establish early American literature as a legitimate field of academic study, Sacvan Bercovitch described Mather's millennialism as a complex system of typological correspondences. According to this reading, the biographies of civic and ecclesiastical leaders in *Magnalia Christi Americana* are symbolic of Mather's determination to place America at the center of the eschatological drama. By identifying parallels between puritan leaders and a range of biblical and patristic figures, Mather innovatively asserted the superiority of latter-day antitype to ancient type. The settlement of New England was thereby imbued with millennial and soteriological significance, as "[t]he destiny of Christ's people in America" became specially representative of "the destiny of mankind" as a whole."¹³ More recently, Reiner Smolinski, Jeffrey Jue, and Jan Stievernann have demonstrated that Mather did *not* believe that

¹³ Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self: With a New Preface* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 62.

New England had a particularly important role to play in the end times or the millennium.¹⁴ Moreover, Smolinski and Stievermann have also shown that Mather's eschatological method was not restricted to the application of scriptural prophecy to secular history. As he tried to make sense of the Bible's often abstruse accounts of the world to come, Mather drew on advances in astronomy, physics, geology, chemistry, and human biology, as well as on certain esoteric disciplines, such as alchemy and the Kabbalah, that had not yet been separated off from scientific thought.¹⁵ So while he regularly set the millennial kingdom that could not be shaken against the political shocks and unhappy contingencies of earthly life, Mather did not assume that proleptic knowledge of that kingdom was itself necessarily static and unchanging. Indeed, he held that increasingly accurate interpretations of the eschatological mysteries would emerge as the apocalypse drew closer.¹⁶ This development, together with scientific and technological progress, was for him but a foretaste of the "*eternally progressive Knowledge*" that the elect would enjoy "in the *Future State*."¹⁷

Mather's association of the millennium with advances in human understanding must be understood with reference to two early modern transformations of the apocalyptic timetable. In the sixteenth century, English Presbyterian Thomas Brightman (1562–1607) challenged the conventional Protestant view that most of the events described in Revelation had already taken place and that the thousand-year period outlined in the book referred to some era within the usual course of history when Satan's influence over human affairs had been mitigated (the time between the

¹⁴ Reiner Smolinski, "Introduction," in *The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather: An Edition of "Triparadisus"*, ed. Reiner Smolinski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 54–59; Jeffrey K. Jue, *Heaven upon Earth: Joseph Mede (1586–1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 186–187; Jan Stievermann, "Reading Canticles in the Tradition of New England Millennialism: John Cotton and Cotton Mather's Commentaries on the Song of Songs," in *Prophecy and Eschatology in the Transatlantic World, 1550–1800*, ed. Andrew Crome (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 222–223.

¹⁵ See Reiner Smolinski, "How to Go to Heaven, or How Heaven Goes? Natural Science and Interpretation in Cotton Mather's 'Biblia Americana' (1693–1728)," *New England Quarterly* 81.2 (2008): 278–329; and Jan Stievermann, *Prophecy, Piety, and the Problem of Historicity: Interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures in Cotton Mather's "Biblia Americana"* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

¹⁶ Michael P. Clark, "The Eschatology of Signs in Cotton Mather's *Biblia Americana*," in *Cotton Mather and Biblia Americana: Essays in Reappraisal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 413–438.

¹⁷ Cotton Mather, *The Christian Philosopher*, ed. Winton U. Solberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 316–317, 316. For more on the link in Mather's thought between intellectual advancement and the approach of the millennium, see Mark A. Petersen, "Theopolis Americana: The City-State of Boston, the Republic of Letters, and the Protestant International, 1689–1739," in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 347–370.

conversion of Constantine and the rise of papal power in the middle ages, for instance).¹⁸ Many of those who clung to this position speculated that Christ would soon return to bring history to a close. Brightman, however, claimed that the prophecies also spoke of a second millennium that had yet to arrive. When it did, he predicted, the world would be transformed: universal peace would prevail and the Jews would convert to Christianity. Crucially, moreover, the end of the world was not yet in sight – who knew how many more wonders God would bring about before the world finally did end?¹⁹ The second key development began in the second half of the seventeenth century, when physico-theologians (religiously motivated scientists) affiliated with the Royal Society in London responded to skeptical materialism's challenge to biblical authority by providing scientific accounts of scriptural events, including the creation and future destruction of the earth. As Peter Harrison explains, this alliance of Protestantism with natural philosophy brought "the Eschaton [into] the span of historical time," opening up the prospect that the new earth would proceed forward "in much the same way as the old one had, and perhaps with similar inhabitants."²⁰ Important scholarly figures such as Thomas Burnet, William Whiston, Henry More, Robert Boyle, and Isaac Newton debated the processes by which the resurrection of the dead might take place, and disputed the astronomical locations of heaven and hell.²¹

Cotton Mather was by no means the first American puritan author to draw on these changes in the way the millennium was framed. As Sarah Rivett has shown, John Eliot's missionary activity among the Native peoples of Massachusetts was closely informed by his conviction that as the end times approached, the constraints on knowledge imposed by the Fall would be loosened and humankind would gradually be permitted greater access to universal truth. Eliot's correspondence with natural philosopher and physico-theologian Robert Boyle therefore details his hope that the application of the Anglo-Irishman's experimental, observational method to the conversion experiences described by "praying Indians" might create an empirical record of the increasingly

¹⁸ Andrew Crome, *The Restoration of the Jews: Early Modern Hermeneutics, Eschatology, and National Identity in the Works of Thomas Brightman* (Cham: Springer, 2014), 60–6; and Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500–2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 39.

¹⁹ Crome, *Restoration*, 81.

²⁰ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 148.

²¹ Harrison, *Natural Science*, 149.

transformative operations of the Holy Spirit in the latter days.²² Zachary Hutchins and Walter Woodward, furthermore, have explored the influence of the new science, as well as older speculative movements such as alchemy and Pansophism, on the thought of John Cotton and John Winthrop, Jr. Both Cotton's plans for Harvard College and Winthrop's vision of New London as a center for alchemical research and medical practice were guided by Francis Bacon's concept of a "Great Instauration" of learning toward the end of secular time.²³ Despite these other examples, however, Mather's extensive corpus contains the most fully realized articulations of speculative millennialism in American puritan literature.

While he produced major early statements of his millennial thinking in *Things to Be Look'd For* (1691), *Problema Theologicum* (1703), and an important mid-career treatment of the topic in *Theopolis Americana* (1710), the final iteration of Mather's eschatological thought, formulated through the last eight years of his life, is the most comprehensive and engaging. And at the center of this last system lay the concept of the *Nishmath-Chajim*, or "breath of life." He developed this theory in the early 1720s in response to a problem that had preoccupied him all his life: How did spiritual beings (angels, demons, God himself) interact with the material realm? The *Nishmath-Chajim* was Mather's variation of the "plastic nature" doctrine that seventeenth-century physico-theologians such as Ralph Cudworth and Henry More had formulated in opposition to strict Cartesian dualism. His medical tract *The Angel of Bethesda* (1724) noted that it was a fabric "of a *Middle Nature*, between the *Rational Soul*, and the *Corporeal Mass*," that was "commensurate" in shape and size with the human form and was "the *Medium of Communication*, by which [soul and body] work[ed] upon One another."²⁴ In the course of mortal life, the *Nishmath-Chajim* governed the operation of the individual's senses and digestion. After death, it would provide a vehicle for the soul as it waited for judgment while separated from the corpse. Later still, it would enable the corporeal resurrection of the dead. Even if furnished with only a small

²² Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 141–153. For more Boyle, see Ralph Bauer's chapter on science (Chapter 15) in this volume.

²³ Zachary McLeod Hutchins, *Inventing Eden: Primitivism, Millennialism, and the Making of New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 110–119; Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606–1676* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

²⁴ Cotton Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda: An Essay upon the Common Maladies of Mankind*, ed. Gordon W. Jones (Barre, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1972), 28. Mather wrote this treatise in 1724, but it remained in manuscript during his lifetime.

piece of the "Forsaken Body," the *Nishmath-Chajim* would be able to create a new, immortal frame for it, filling it up with an "*Ethereal Matter*, fitt for the Coelestial Employments and Enjoyments intended for it."²⁵ As this passage makes clear, the breath of life not only provided Mather with a means of proving the reality of the spiritual world against those who would doubt it, but also allowed him to emphasize the physical, tangible nature of life during the millennium, at a time when some philosophers and theologians were beginning to view the afterlife as an entirely spiritual state of existence.²⁶

Trip Paradise (1726/7), Mather's fullest expression of his mature eschatology, uses the restoration of the body by the *Nishmath-Chajim* as the conceptual point of origin for its exploration of the modes of being that would flourish on the millennial earth. There he explained that the deceased elect who would be resurrected at the beginning of the millennium would occupy flawless, sexless bodies that would be "Able to Move, and Mount, and Fly, as the Angels do."²⁷ In order to emphasize the extent to which these "raised saints" would constitute a new evolution of human life, Mather noted that they would resemble the first parents of the race before the Fall. First, their flesh would be clothed in a "*Luminous Garment*" that would cause it to shine as Adam and Eve's had "while they continued in their Sinless Integrity."²⁸ Second, in the process of reconstituting their bodies through the *Nishmath-Chajim*, Christ would infuse them with "an *Energy* of His," so that the resurrected believers would become "*Members of His Body, of His Flesh, & of His Bones*" just as Eve was said to be "*Bone of [Adam's] Bone, and Flesh of his Flesh*," when she was formed from his side.²⁹ In this way, the raised saints would no longer be sons and daughters of men and women, but would instead "be *Born of GOD*," literally and materially. Mather's investment in the fine detail of this process is indicative of his commitment to understanding (as far as he could) the new stakes of the saints' lives. Their angelic, genderless bodies symbolized their arrival at the furthest limits of human potential, as did the

²⁵ Mather, *Angel of Bethesda*, 30.

²⁶ Fernando Vidal has shown how this "gradual disembodiment" of the next world (and therefore of human selfhood) began when Locke's work on psychology and the corpuscular theory of matter raised questions about the probability and possibility of the resurrection of the same human body. See Fernando Vidal, "Brains, Bodies, Selves, and Science: Anthropologies of Identity and the Resurrection of the Body," *Critical Inquiry* 28.4 (2002): 930–974 ("gradual disembodiment," 969).

²⁷ Cotton Mather, *The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather: An Edition of "Trip Paradise,"* ed. Reiner Smolinski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 256.

²⁸ Mather, *Trip Paradise*, 136. ²⁹ Mather, *Trip Paradise*, 265.

fact that their new home would be the heavenly New Jerusalem, which he pictured as being suspended in the air above its earthly equivalent. At the same time, thanks to a certain continuity provided by the *Nishmath-Chajim*, the risen ones would retain enough of a resemblance to their former appearances that they would be able to recognize each other and exchange reminiscences about their "Travels thro' the Wilderness" of mortal existence.³⁰ This ongoing connection to life on earth would also find an expression in their eagerness to visit and minister to the "changed saints" – those among the elect who would still be living at the time of Christ's Second Coming and whose constitutions would be radically altered to allow them to survive the Conflagration at the beginning of the end times and to thrive during the millennium that would unfold on the purified planet. Although these men and women would also be rendered immortal, their bodies and lives would not be as completely transformed as those of their resurrected counterparts. *Trip Paradise* observes that they would continue to build houses, plant crops, keep animals, and produce offspring, while they flourished under the rule of the raised saints, the new "*Kings of the Earth*."³¹

As supernatural and spiritualized as it was, Mather's vision of the millennium was never entirely alienated from the course of secular history and humankind's present, compromised state. On a scientific level, his "discovery" of the *Nishmath-Chajim*, a central part of his account of the afterlife, opened up the possibility of a new approach to diagnosing and treating the exigencies of this life. Since it was the force that gave "Strength [to] Every Part in our Body," the breath of life was also the principle "*Seat*" and "*Source*" of "our *Diseases*."³² Mather argued, therefore, that the pious devotion that would keep this spirit in good working order was even more essential to the maintenance of general health than were the medical remedies he described throughout *The Angel of Bethesda*.³³ Living in the right way required the elect to act as if they were already citizens of heaven, by anticipating the purity of their resurrected state as far as was possible. Mather also encouraged Christians to meditate regularly on the souls of departed saints, who were awaiting their resurrection day in a special district of heaven given over to their safekeeping. The holy dead were not sleeping there, but actively praising God in eager expectation of the time they would be able to serve him in the flesh. This longing for

³⁰ Mather, *Trip Paradise*, 261. See also *Angel of Bethesda*, 31–32.

³¹ Mather, *Trip Paradise*, 287–289.

³² Mather, *Angel of Bethesda*, 33.

³³ Mather, *Angel of Bethesda*, 37–38.

resurrection united the living and departed elect: “the *Saints* which are *Dead* before us,” Mather noted, “*will not be made perfect without us . . . the Patriarchs* have not yett received what God promised . . . , because *We* who are to receive the Same with them, are yett where we are.”³⁴ Though he consistently emphasized the destruction of political authority that the millennium would bring about, he also insisted that the living and dead saints were part of the same political community, the same “Company.” The prospect of governing the regenerated earth together with those who had gone before, he suggested, ought to serve as a consolation and inspiration in hard times. The later years of his career saw the attrition of puritan cultural authority in New England; nonconformists in Great Britain, meanwhile, were still prevented from holding public office. During the millennium, however, there would be no “*Tests for Employments* in profitable *Places*” to “exclude . . . the most *Faithful Officers*.”³⁵ Then, all those who had lived and died in God’s name would become as angels, effortlessly traversing the distances that now made colonial life so challenging, enacting ordinances perfectly in sympathy with the divine will.

The eschatological vision of Mather’s friend Samuel Sewall was structured around a considerably less dramatic alteration of both the political and natural worlds. Though he was a careful and close reader of Mather’s work on the subject, in many ways Sewall’s conception of the new earth was closer to the schemes set out by John Cotton and John Eliot, the most prominent millennialists among the first generation of New England ministers. For example, Sewall most likely believed, with Cotton and Eliot, that the Conflagration would take place at the end of the thousand-year reign of the saints. This meant that the millennium that he described in *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica* (1697; 2nd ed. 1727), his signature treatment of the topic, did not take place on the supernaturally transfigured planet of Mather’s imagination. Like Cotton and Eliot, Sewall envisioned what scholars now call an “inchoate millennium” – a progressive amelioration of the conditions of life facilitated by the rule of godly authorities in both the civil and ecclesiastical spheres.³⁶ Yet the

³⁴ Mather, *Triparadisus*, 128. ³⁵ Mather, *Triparadisus*, 263, 264.

³⁶ For summaries of “inchoate” approaches to the millennium, see Reiner Smolinski, “Apocalypticism in Colonial North America,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 3 (New York: Continuum, 1998), 41–43, 45–47. As Smolinski notes, Cotton Mather himself favored an inchoate millennium before developing his final model in the 1720s. A key detail of this earlier theory was that the Conflagration would initially be “confined mostly to Italy,” becoming a globally destructive force only at the *end* of the millennium (49).

Phaenomena does depict a planet on which global geopolitics have been entirely transformed.

Most strikingly, Sewall suggests that the New Jerusalem that would serve as the capital of the millennial earth might be situated in the Americas, rather than in the old world. More specifically, he argues that Mexico would be a suitable location for the construction of that holy city. Scriptural prophecy demanded that the gospel must be established in “*the Uttermost parts of the earth*” before the advent of the end times, and America’s position at the “*Beginning of the East, and the End of the West*” meant that its Christianization fulfilled this stipulation admirably.³⁷ It was fitting, too, that the new seat of God on earth should be built upon the ruins of the Antichristian empire of Spain. But while Sewall believed that an apocalyptic conflict against the Catholic Spanish was imminent, he also proposed that the missions of New Spain would ultimately turn out to be important early contributions to the conversion of America and the arrival of the millennium: “By means of the *Spaniard*,” he observed, “the *Indians* have a School in every Town for Reading and Writing”; therefore, “What is done or prepared by Papists among [these pagans], is not to be despised; but improved by Protestants.”³⁸ The American site of “the City of the Great KING” in the *Phaenomena* should not, therefore, be parsed as an expression of puritan exceptionalism. Instead, the text advocates for a conception of history that transcends the politics of empire and of nation-building. During the millennium, it suggests, people would look back on the era of colonial rivalries between European powers as a brief period of strife within a longer narrative of growing peace, prosperity, and godliness. In this respect, Sewall’s work supports Nan Goodman’s contention that the end of the seventeenth century witnessed a cosmopolitan turn in puritan millennialism, inspired in part by the developing concept of an international law of nations.³⁹

Notwithstanding this internationalist trajectory, the *Phaenomena* was also a defense of the New England way. The probable founding of the New Jerusalem on American soil was testament to Sewall’s conviction that the puritan plantations would in due course be revealed to be part of the arduous process whereby a pagan continent was made worthy of hosting the city of God. Indeed, the very beginning of the tract insists that mortal

³⁷ Samuel Sewall, *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica ad aspectum Novi Orbis configurata* (Boston, 1697), 3.

³⁸ Sewall, *Phaenomena*, 65, 64.

³⁹ Nan Goodman, *The Puritan Cosmopolis: The Law of Nations and the Early American Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 83–107.

men and women must always be defined by “the respect they bear to [a particular] *Place*” and the “successive duration” of their and their forbears’ existence there.⁴⁰ The bucolic ending, a detailed description of Plum Island, close to Sewall’s childhood home at Newbury, links the natural cycles of the Massachusetts landscape to the quiet persistence of puritan life there: “As long as the Sea-Fowl shall know the Time of their coming,” it claims, “[a]s long as any free and harmless Doves shall find a White Oak, or other Trees within the Township, to perch, or feed, or build a careless Nest upon . . . So long shall Christians be born [in New England].”⁴¹ As Timothy Sweet observes, Sewall in this passage raises the possibility of a gradual, “entropic” exhaustion of the planet’s resources, an apocalyptic scenario strikingly different to the sudden inferno predicted by Cotton Mather’s later writings.⁴² The suggestion that the earth might “grow Old and dote” seems to connect Sewall’s eschatology with modern concerns about the degradation of the ecosphere. Equally, it may also reflect the judge’s intellectual conservatism: he rejected the new heliocentric model of the galaxy and was therefore far less inclined than Mather was to work up scientific models of the physical processes by which the world might be suddenly destroyed.

Yet even a traditionalist like Sewall, who tended to view the millennium more as a continuation than an abrogation of the current state of things, was capable of using the prospect of existence after death to think through pressing philosophical questions. His diary for 1711 notes that during a dinner with his fellow justices, Sewall brought up the question as to whether Africans “should be white after the Resurrection.”⁴³ In the course of a lively discussion, one of Sewall’s peers complained that the question was “absurd,” since the raised saints would be rendered “void of all Colour.” The judge replied that the resurrected body should not be construed as “a Spirit,” directing his interlocutor to the words of the risen Christ in the gospel of Luke: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” In *The Selling of Joseph*, a pamphlet published eleven years previously, Sewall had argued for the ending of New England’s

⁴⁰ Sewall, *Phaenomena*, 1. ⁴¹ Sewall, *Phaenomena*, 69.

⁴² Timothy Sweet, “‘What Concernment Hath America in These Things!’ Local and Global in Samuel Sewall’s Plum Island Passage,” *Early American Literature* 41.2 (2006): 229. See also Timothy Sweet’s chapter on environment (Chapter 14) in this volume.

⁴³ Samuel Sewall, *Diary of Samuel Sewall*, in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, fifth series, vol. 6 (Boston, 1879), 2: 305. For analysis of the racial dimensions of puritan millennialism, see Christopher Trigg, “The Racial Politics of Resurrection in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World,” *Early American Literature* 55.1 (2020): 47–84.

involvement in the slave trade, in part on the grounds that African men and women were too different from Europeans to form “orderly Families” and societies with them.⁴⁴ The debate with his colleagues demonstrated that although he lacked the resources for thinking about radical sociocultural change transpiring on this planet (either before or during the millennium), he was still willing to speculate about the ways in which existence in heaven might redress the inequalities and disparities that he perceived around him.

In Thomas Prince, finally, we once again encounter an author who was prepared to imagine radical transformations taking place during the millennium and who was able to evaluate the scientific theories that claimed to explain how those changes would come about. In the late summer of 1722, Prince attended a conference “about the coming and Kingdom of God our Saviour” organized by Mather.⁴⁵ Sewall was also invited to this “combination” of millennialists, even though Mather believed that the judge had “a less degree of relish” for eschatological speculation, as he confided to Prince. Indeed, Sewall’s comparative caution on the subject meant that he was a valuable foil – Mather noted that “his objections to our interpretations may be of use to us, to prevent our going too easily into mistakes.” As Mather’s confidence in him here suggests, Prince closely subscribed to the eschatological model his senior colleague established at the end of his career. And while Prince did not produce an exploration of the millennium anything like as detailed or as comprehensive as *Trip paradisu*, bold millennial speculations are scattered throughout his now somewhat neglected body of work.

Following the death of his son Thomas Prince, Jr., for instance, he preached a sermon on resurrection that explored the practicalities of the process in some detail. The bodies of the raised saints, he explained, would be so “perfectly subtilized and refined” in their “material substance” as to be “free from the laws of gravity and attraction.”⁴⁶ The trajectories that they would trace through the heavens would be “vastly finer and swifter than . . . rays of light,” and they would be “capable of penetrating . . . through chrystal, or the thinnest æther, as their soul desireth and directeth, without restraint or resistance.”⁴⁷ Resurrection, Prince believed, not only

⁴⁴ Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial* (Boston, 1700), [2].

⁴⁵ Kenneth Silverman, ed., *Selected Letters of Cotton Mather* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 352.

⁴⁶ Thomas Prince, “On the Death of Thomas Prince Jr.,” in *Six Sermons by the Late Thomas Prince, A.M.*, ed. John Erskine (Edinburgh, 1785), 153.

⁴⁷ Prince, “On the Death of Thomas Prince Jr.,” 153–154.

would liberate humankind from the shackles of sin but would allow them to exceed the narrow existential limits in which their imaginations currently confined them. The sermon for his son is nevertheless singularly preoccupied by the “vileness” that marks mortal life. Although this putrefaction inhabits the human body on a microscopic level, Prince clarifies that “no single particle of material substance may be termed vile.”⁴⁸ Rather than an integral property of reality, vileness is for him a “disorder” that affects “collection[s]” of atoms. It was therefore possible to conceive of a reorganization of the world that would enable the redemption of matter. This procedure would need to cleanse the earth of its corruption: “The elements we breathe in,” Prince explained, “the food we live on, are full of numbers of seeds, of innumerable kinds of worms and putrid substances: These go into our blood and all our juices. They circulate in every channel, infect every vessel.”⁴⁹ The means by which this physical and moral pollution spread, and the way in which it might be alleviated, were particular fascinations of Prince’s, and he addressed them in sermons on death and resurrection, including in his remarks on the untimely death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, in 1751.

There Prince noted that though the weakness of the human body was a result of the Fall, the vitiation of the planet itself was a result of the Flood, which “whether by Means of a *Comet* or otherwise,” altered the astronomical “Course of the Earth,” thereby “rendering the Seasons extremely unequal” and making the atmosphere “variable, disordered, poysonous and pernicious.”⁵⁰ Because the sun and moon of the antediluvian planet had been “always in the *Equinoctial*,” he wrote elsewhere, there had been “a *perpetual Spring* throughout the Earth.”⁵¹ And since he believed that the eschatological Conflagration would “open” the world “into a glorious state of universal and abundant light and grace,” it is likely that he assumed that the recalibration of the planet’s orbit was one of the methods by which this would be achieved.⁵² The perfectly unified global community that would be established on the millennial earth would require a perfectly balanced global ecosystem to support it.

Prince made this last prediction in *The Endless Increase of Christ’s Government*, a sermon he preached before the annual convention of

⁴⁸ Prince, “On the Death of Thomas Prince Jr.,” 141.

⁴⁹ Prince, “On the Death of Thomas Prince Jr.,” 142.

⁵⁰ Prince, *God Destroyeth the Hopes of Man* (Boston, 1751), 6.

⁵¹ Thomas Prince, *Christ Abolishing Death* (Boston, 1736), 8 n.

⁵² Thomas Prince, “The Endless Increase of Christ’s Government,” in *Six Sermons by the Late Thomas Prince*, ed. Erskine, 28.

Massachusetts ministers in 1740 (and again, at Boston's weekly Thursday lecture in 1756). This text is important because it demonstrates that for all his emphasis on the physical regeneration of the world's environment in the aftermath of the Conflagration, he did not conceive of the improvement of the planet as an entirely ahistorical proceeding, which would begin only with its physical refinement. Instead, the sermon suggests that the millennium is in some ways just one more stage in the process denoted by its title: the eternal consolidation of the Son of God's reign over his father's creation that had been gathering pace ever since his incarnation, passion, and resurrection. In 1740, this new phase seemed to be drawing nearer as the English evangelist George Whitefield was attracting massive crowds across the colonies (eventually, Prince declared, the revival of true religion would spread to "Calefornia" and on to "Japan and China, Tartary, India, Persia, Africa, and Egypt," before returning to "Zion, where it [first] rose").⁵³ In 1756, the conflict that would later be known as the Seven Years' War appeared to be another means by which God would "enlighten the utmost regions of America."

But Prince was not satisfied with a merely global frame of reference. He was just as interested in God's plan for humanity *after* the millennium as before it. When it finally drew to a close (after "*three hundred and sixty thousand years*," rather than just a thousand), the changed saints and their descendants would be "transported to the heavenly paradise" where they would be joined by elect creatures from the "innumerable multitudes" of planets across the universe.⁵⁴ And since it was likely that "innumerable companies have been, are, and will be constantly ascending to the heavenly world" from "millions" of "globes" besides the earth, Prince suggested that heaven itself would need to "grow for ever" in order to accommodate all of them.⁵⁵ Cotton Mather had also raised the possibility of saints living on other planets in his millennial writings (after death, he noted, the elect might well be told "what has been done" by God's providence "in *Other Worlds*").⁵⁶ But Prince carried his predictions even further, back to the post-millennial earth and the prospect of post-human life there. At the end of the millennium, he explains, "the number of the race of Adam shall be completed," as all the saints are translated to heaven, and all the damned imprisoned in hell.⁵⁷ Yet even then, "the government of Christ . . . in this lower world" will be far from over. The new world will be ready "for another sort or series of inhabitants, and another scene of

⁵³ Prince, "Endless," 28.

⁵⁴ Prince, "Endless," 28, 33.

⁵⁵ Prince, "Endless," 34.

⁵⁶ Cotton Mather, *Cælestinus* (Boston, 1723), 146.

⁵⁷ Prince, "Endless," 28.

wondrous dispensations; over which, as the Son of God, he will preside and reign” forever.⁵⁸

In many ways, Prince’s career represents the high point of this kind of speculation in American puritan millennialism. The revivals he welcomed as a sign of the end times elicited a surge in eschatological sentiment, but the urgency of the soteriological question that they posed (“what must I do to be saved *immediately?*”), militated against patient, learned contemplation of the nature of the new earth. The most radical revivalists, indeed, believed that they were capable of embodying otherworldly perfection right then and there.⁵⁹ During the revolution, meanwhile, the claim that America’s break with Britain had inaugurated the final age of the world took precedence over detailed descriptions of life during the millennium. While there was a brief resurgence of millennial speculation in the 1790s,⁶⁰ as the nineteenth century progressed it became increasingly difficult to use the latest developments in scientific thought to explain how God would transform the earth during the thousand years.

What, then, has been the legacy of speculative millennialism? It is admittedly far easier to trace the influence of the *deus ex machina* type of puritan apocalypticism mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Insofar as they suggest that the triumph of the good is both certain and in jeopardy, transcendently guaranteed by God (or nature) and yet also within range of human endeavor, texts as diverse as Tom Paine’s *American Crisis* No. 1, Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream,” and Ronald Reagan’s “A Vision for America” all bear the imprint of that form. Yet wherever authors have interrogated the limits of what is possible for human life, whether through science fiction, utopianism, or futurist philosophy, their work has paralleled the thought discussed here.

⁵⁸ Prince, “Endless,” 29.

⁵⁹ For more on the immortalism and perfectionism professed by some revivalists, see Douglas L. Winiarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 404–434.

⁶⁰ Ruth Bloch identifies Samuel Hopkins’s *Treatise on the Millennium* (1793) and Elhanan Winchester’s *Lectures on the Prophecies That Remain to Be Fulfilled* (published in London in 1789, reprinted in Norwich, CT, in 1792) as representative examples of the turn back to thinking “about what life would be like during the millennium” in the 1790s. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 123.

*Postsecularism**Bryce Traister*

For a very long time now, the modern west has measured historical time in relation to the birth of Jesus Christ. While many academics are turning to the “Common Era” (CE) notation scheme to indicate when things happened, it is probably fair to say that most folks continue to mark the key dates of human civilization in relation to the theorized birth year of Christ. Whether or not we adhere to any particular faith, we adhere to a Christian calendar. And this phenomenon isn’t limited to the west. While the civilization of China has reached the year 4718 (a “Year of the Rat” in its sixty-year-long cycle), this is largely a ceremonial and localized reckoning, even in China. From Beijing to Moscow to New York City to Kelowna, British Columbia, the year is 2020 at the time of this essay’s writing. The Gregorian calendar, adopted (or decreed) in the later sixteenth century, spread through renaissance Europe and into the era of European colonization to become the world’s uncontested standard of global historical time.¹ Secular time remains keyed to the sacred calendar.

It is a simple enough observation, but one worth thinking about in relation to the emergence within twenty-first-century thought of “post-secularism.” Postsecularism identifies a condition we inhabit in relation to both secular and religious ways of knowing the world, of thinking historically, and of acting politically. The postsecular perspective indicates a critical view of the secularization narrative of nineteenth-century modernity. This narrative is itself the child of the European Enlightenment’s marriage of Newtonian physics, Kantian rationalism, and the democratic revolutions of France and the British colonies. According to this critique, there was no complete “secularization” of the modern, revolutionary, and

¹ For a history of the Gregorian calendar, see Duncan Steel, *Marking Time: The Epic Quest to Invent the Perfect Calendar* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2000).

democratic states of Europe and the Americas.² There was, rather, the expansion of a non-religion-identified public sphere, a corollary “retreat” of the religious from the public sphere into politically irrelevant enclosures of privatized faith, and, via the scientific revolutions of the eighteenth century, a more thorough “disenchantment” of a world now understood to be a progressive and evolutionary resource for human knowledge rather than a divinely regulated secret available to human comprehension only through spiritual revelation. Nobody really disputes that secularization “happened” over the course of the modern period or that the intellectual and political classes of modern Europe understood their work to be secular undertakings. In its critical perspective, postsecularism holds that these tendencies produced a narrative of secularization told as a story of modernity’s victory over religion. This is the “-ism” of the modern secular: it advances what amounts to an ideological claim about religion’s diminished role in framing human culture and political life. The secularization narrative, in other words, confirms its own credibility by reference to the nation-states (post-monarchy France, the United States) whose success is the direct consequence of secularism’s victorious embrace. Postsecularism is a critique of that attitude. In reexamining that attitude, more positively, postsecularism offers a perspective that understands religion to be a resource for peoples of modern liberal nation-states to understand and practice democratic citizenship.³

In its general critique of secularization narratives, postsecularism demonstrates that neither “the secular” nor “the religious” indicate stable and unchanging conditions of human knowledge or political behavior. Here we might turn to the insights of religious anthropology to consider postsecularism’s assertion of a relational and contingent understanding of religion’s relation to the secular. Writing in the wake of 9/11, Talal Asad argued that “the secular” is itself a construct, a historically determined and temporally bounded gesture of conceptualization that locates sacred and secular ways of knowing within a single and mutually constituted conceptual field of knowledge and cultural practice. Asad’s study offers a way of

² In their introduction to a special collection of *American Literature* entitled “After the Post-Secular,” Peter Coviello and Jared Hickman argue that “The secularization thesis is dead.” See Coviello and Hickman, “Introduction: After the Postsecular,” *American Literature* 86.4 (2015): 645.

³ This is essentially the position Jürgen Habermas takes in “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14.1 (2006): 1–25. For a summary of the term’s emergence and development in the early twenty-first century, see Gregor McLennan, “The Postsecular Turn,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 27.4 (2010): 3–20. See also the collection of essays edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen, *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

“understanding how the sacred . . . can become the object not only of religious thought but of secular practice too.”⁴ Holding both secular and sacred objects, beliefs, and cultural practices within the same view, and understanding that view itself to be conditioned by the presence of simultaneously religious and nonreligious concepts, enables postsecular critique to engage a cultural politics of the sacred. If one of the master narratives of the secular holds that religion resides primarily in the modern west’s historical past, then postsecularism enables us to think more comprehensively about the many ways that religious culture persists and informs the present.

This being said, it is worth observing what may be obvious: the modern west is in all kinds of ways committed to secular politics, and has been for several centuries now. That “the secular” in the modern west might have a historical beginning and end point is itself a postsecular claim. On the “beginning” or origins side of an epochal concept of “a secular age,” we have a great deal of scholarship about when we began to be more secular and less religious about the business of living. The contributing factors to the “pro-secular” narrative are familiar to many: the rise of democratic governance toward the end of the late renaissance/early modern periods, the emergence of an ambitious colonial mercantilism led by a nonlanded bourgeois class, and the articulation, in philosophy and theology, of nonreligious explanations of the natural world and an emphatic focus on the capacity of human understanding to comprehend both itself and the given world. This is both a broad-stroke and partial list, to be sure, but taken together they created what Charles Taylor describes as the conditions of a secular age in which secular and religious ways of thinking might be broadly categorized into three distinct concepts. The first concept, or “secular 1,” indicates the idea that people who considered themselves “religious” had a conception of undertaking the business of worldly affairs as “nonreligious” activities; that is, the business of living became separate from spiritual life. “Secular 2,” in the modernizing west, is the inheritance of the Enlightenment and defines a world in which public spaces and civil practices are emptied of God or an ultimately spiritual set of meanings, and in which expressions or practices of religion become increasingly marginal. In “secular 3,” according to what has become the ultimate meme of Taylor’s study, religion has become a condition of modern life in which it “is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the

⁴ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 37.

easiest to embrace.”⁵ The very idea that one can choose religion or not is itself a secular concept, but when we observe further that “optional religion” neither lessens nor invalidates the power of religion to shape the lives of both its adherents and skeptics, we are moving within the intellectual and conceptual field of postsecularism.⁶

In the United States, if not the watching world, we became postsecular on September 11, 2001. What the 9/11 attacks and responses made uncomfortably clear was that some of secularism’s central assumptions – including a few dear to the United States – either had suddenly become untenable or were revealed on that fall morning to have been symptomatic of some pretty magical thinking. Religion’s retreat? It just brought down the World Trade Center. The triumph of reason? Suicidal mass murder. Separation of church and state? Here is where the attack and the US response sounded eerily similar notes, for the 9/11 attacks remobilized a distinctly US discourse of the sacred nation, exceptional in its unique self-designation as the embattled conscience of the world’s aspirations. In a speech to a joint meeting of the full Congress, the president of the United States, George W. Bush, declared, “On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country.”⁷ The “freedom” the president identified here is keyed to the political inheritance of the Anglo-American Enlightenment: the “advance of human freedom,” he says a few minutes later, “the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time – now depends on us.” American freedoms are – indeed, have always been, in this reckoning – the shared cause of progressive and universal civilization. The 9/11 attacks provided a way to reconnect present-day America’s future as the designated defender of values once championed by religion. One of those values, as we shall shortly discuss in more detail, is the freedom to practice religious faith without political interference. What is “secular,” in this reckoning, is the political right to practice religion, which is not really a declaration of secularism’s victory so much as it is a reminder of secularism’s continued religious conditioning.

Viewed as historiographical invitation, postsecularism helps us think about some of the earliest colonial versions of an American secularist imaginary grounded in Christian, and more specifically Protestant,

⁵ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.

⁶ For an excellent review of postsecularism in literary studies, see Alison Conway and Corrine Harol, “Toward a Postsecular Eighteenth Century,” *Literature Compass* 11.1 (2015): 565–574.

⁷ George W. Bush, “President Bush Addresses the Nation,” *Washington Post*, September 20, 2011, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html, accessed July 14, 2019.

religious values. Viewed both historically and in the immediate wake of 9/11, the United States has emerged with a revitalized “exceptionalist” claim, one that rehearses and so revives a set of “origins” and special status claims keyed to religion. Indeed, American postsecularism has emerged in the twenty-first century as something of an ecumenical critical frame that allows scholars and thinkers from diverse and even competing disciplinary and intellectual traditions outside religious or theological studies to talk about religion.⁸ In *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*, theorists from three different intellectual perspectives (philosophy, anthropology, political theory) argue that in the wake of 9/11, religion has emerged as a key measure for evaluating the efficacy of a range of legal and political practices and beliefs, from free speech to hate speech, prayer in schools to burning the American flag.⁹ Postsecularism sources secular liberty and national identity to a Protestant-enabled historiography of the United States. This narrative mobilizes both the valorization and victimization of the exercise of “religious freedom” as a politically inviolable *right* that derived from and developed a curiously American postsecular concept of toleration.

Recent scholarship in colonial and Early American studies, if not in American literary and cultural studies more broadly, has eagerly taken up postsecular approaches to thinking about religion and culture.¹⁰ We are today still grappling with the claim that a unitary seventeenth-century “New England Mind” presided over the emergence of a “Yankee” culture in the eighteenth century, a foundational position established in the mid-twentieth century by Perry Miller.¹¹ Our view of religion’s defining contribution to American national and regional culture has, to be sure, changed over the years. American studies spent much of its time in the 1980s and 1990s moving away from the Miller thesis and its implicit

⁸ Although beyond the scope of this essay to address, the resurgence of religion as an object of study in twenty-first-century Americanist scholarship, following a relatively fallow period in the 1980s and 1990s, is beyond dispute. For a prescient critique of religion’s “disappearance” from American studies in this period, see Jenny Franchot, “Invisible Domain: Religion and American Literary Studies,” *American Literature* 67.4 (1995): 833–842.

⁹ Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

¹⁰ See, for example, Michael Kaufmann, “Post-secular Puritans: Recent Retrials of Anne Hutchinson,” *Early American Literature* 45.1 (2010): 31–59; Sarah Rivett, “Religious Exceptionalism and American Literary History: The Puritan Origins of the American Self in 2012,” *Early American Literature* 47.2 (2012): 391–410; and Rivett, “Early American Religion in a Postsecular Age,” *PMLA* 128.4 (October 2013): 989–996.

¹¹ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

“exceptionalist” mentality, not only turning to a more diversified archive of women, enslaved, and Indigenous representations of colonial settler culture but more polemically rejecting the implicitly nationalist underpinnings of an American “field imaginary” beholden to an American “puritan origins” story. If a “return to religion” might fairly be regarded as part of a broader interest in postsecular method and perspective, then one of its challenges has been to restore the centrality of religious history and continuing influence to the ongoing study of early American culture without reasserting a paradigm of puritan and post-puritan Protestant dominance as a kind of proto-nationalist imperial standard. Can we today tell such a story?

The answer is, only with some difficulty. Tracy Fessenden has trenchantly argued that in the United States, the “secular” has more or less provided an alibi for America’s continued assumption of a univocal Protestant heritage and national identity. “Far from being a neutral matrix,” she writes, “the secular sphere as constituted in American politics, culture, and jurisprudence has long been more permeable to some religious interventions than others.” Catholics, Quakers, Mormons, Muslims, Indigenous Americans, and Jews have all been framed, at various points, as religious or spiritual “enemies of the state,” whereas “an implicitly Christian culture puts pressure on all who make claims on American institutions to constitute themselves as religious on a recognizably Protestant model.” The “career of secularization in American culture” is the result of “the consolidation of a Protestant ideology that has grown more entrenched and controlling even as its manifestations have become less visibly religious.” If “secularization,” in this reading, is little more than an alibi for “Protestantization,” then critically evaluating the career of the American secular, from any perspective, will invariably rehearse a puritan “exceptionalist” narrative as the continued frame of reference for comprehending a secular political and cultural present.¹²

Americanist scholarship has for many years now rightly questioned the continuing exceptionalism claimed and advanced by the puritan secular narrative in the United States.¹³ To some extent, some of this scholarship relies on straw arguments to advance a postexceptionalist account of American literary and cultural studies. More broadly, however, this style

¹² Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 4. Further citations made parenthetically.

¹³ For a recent and far-reaching consideration of exceptionalism’s endurance, see William Spanos, *Redeemer Nation in the Interregnum: An Untimely Meditation on the American Vocation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

of critique assumes an intact secularization narrative as its own enabling condition. The “transnational” critique of American studies is particularly exemplary in this regard, holding as it does a conception of the contemporary nation-state’s capacity to manage multicultural pluralism and a fully enfranchised democracy as the basic condition of a progressive politics that no longer needs the nation-state to secure it.¹⁴ Where an authentic religious pluralism advances progressive cultural politics, then the secular state is deemed positive to the extent that its hitherto hidden Protestant interior is exposed and abandoned to a repudiated historical past. What emerges in this style of critique is a morally inflected critique of the secular: it is deemed “good” or “bad” depending on whether or not it fulfills one or another political imperative. Postsecular critique seeks rather to sponsor recognition rather than reaction. It seeks to better understand how the puritan and Protestant past continues to inform contemporary styles of US political and cultural life in formations that may or may not be visibly religious in their bearing.

Such a reconceptualization might begin with the antinomians of the seventeenth-century New England Protestant settlement. This section will focus on three of those figures: the ministers Roger Williams and John Cotton, and a prominent member of the settlement’s laity, Anne Hutchinson. Williams and Cotton are not typically branded antinomians; indeed, a good deal of scholarship over the years has danced around the subject, and even denied there even was such a thing as “antinomianism,” much less a specific controversy that exhaustively defined it.¹⁵ All semantics and competing hagiographical agendas aside, it is fair to say that all three figures advanced a vision of Protestant spirituality that was both radical for its time and crucial to the intellectual foundation and articulation of a puritan American postsecular imaginary in the United States.

Roger Williams was one of the early migrants to the Massachusetts Bay, arriving in Boston in 1631 as a self-defined persecusant of the Church of England’s conformist-demanding archbishop, William Laud. It was not long before his separatist inclinations landed him in hot water with an emergent Boston civil-clerical authority represented by the General Court, which convicted him of “sedition and heresy” in 1635 and banished him

¹⁴ For one of many such examples, see Donald Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

¹⁵ For two such studies, see Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–1641* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Jonathan Beecher Field, “The Antinomian Controversy Did Not Take Place,” *Early American Studies* 6.2 (Fall 2008): 448–463.

from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The “dangerous opinions” for which he was expelled centered on the complex relationship of civil and spiritual authority then being theorized and practiced in the early settlement years. Among other things, Williams held that Bay Colony Congregationalist church discipline improperly extended civil (or secular) authority into the spiritual realm, that the application of civil authority in matters spiritual represented a sinful assertion of human agency into domains properly managed only by God, and that, in the words of his 1652 separatist polemic “The Hireling Ministry None of Christs,” God “Grant the *bodies* of the *Nations* to be but *naturall*, but *civill*, and therefore cannot without the changings of *Gods spirit*, be possibly fit as *spirituall*.” Williams’s particular target here was enforcing tithes (taxes and payments) to an establishment ministry – or a “national church,” in his words – but whatever the particular sin in his sights, Williams maintained a lifelong and strenuous aversion to the civil encroachment into spiritual affairs. “The civill Sword (therefore) cannot (rightfully) act either in Restraining the Souls of the people from Worship &c, or in constraining them to worship.”¹⁶ Whether understood as a defense of individual “liberty of conscience” in religious matters or as an attack on the violation of spiritual precincts by civil authority, Williams’s polemics have long been understood to be founding documents in a narrative of American secularism’s origins as a freedom to practice religion as an exercise of individual conscience.

The inviolability of religious conscience eventually became the source of a secular conception of political liberty, a formula “enshrined,” as we are often told, in the US Constitution’s Bill of Rights, First Amendment, first clause: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Over the years, historians and political theorists have credited Roger Williams with the “invention” of this concept, and the First Amendment has served as the location of any number of legal and political battles over the plausible contradiction between the first (no official religion) and second (religious conscience) provisions of the “establishment clause.” Williams would likely have consented wholly to the first, perhaps grumblingly to the second. He had little patience with religious wrongheadedness, but even less for the intrusions of government into the affairs of private religious conscience. The “separation of church and state,” as we refer colloquially to the establishment clause today, was more about protecting religious belief *from* political

¹⁶ Roger Williams, *The Hireling Ministry None of Christs* (London, 1652).

interference than it was about protecting the state from the intrusions of religion, as the secularist view would have it. Indeed, for the architects of the Constitution, to say nothing of its interpreters, the entire point of the establishment clause was to create the conditions necessary in a democratic polity for the maintenance of religious belief by the citizens consenting to their governance as a people. Religious belief's necessary presence, rather than its disappearance (à la Taylor's "secular 2"), formed the basis of the national covenant expressed in the Constitution's establishment clause.

Adherents to the secularization narrative have frequently argued that the primary value of the establishment clause is to "protect" the secular affairs of the state from the incursions of religious belief. No official religion. No prayer in public schools. No exerting government authority as an extension of any religious doctrine or even the assertion of an individual's religious beliefs through the delivery or withholding of governmental service. More properly understood here as the "disestablishment" clause, the First Amendment's contribution to a state properly separated from the church has served as something like an article of faith for those committed to religion's disappearance from civil governance. Disestablishment is a signpost for the ascendancy of American secularism. The advocates of disestablishment have historically advanced a secularization narrative that, at least with respect to US national history, begins with disestablishment: America itself is a secular country because it is grounded fundamentally in the idea that the national state officially emerged only when religion disappeared. Postsecular critique observes that this perspective is an attitude of secularism, rather than a declaration of secularism's victory.

As we have seen with Roger Williams, the New England puritans were actively debating the proper role of civil authority in the administration of religious practice more or less from the start of settlement. A less well-known episode in this history is the debate that took place between the minister John Cotton and most of his ministerial brethren in Boston in the middle years of the 1630s. The dispute between Cotton and his fellow ministers has often gone ignored in studies of the more famous "Antinomian controversy" or "free grace controversy" centering on Anne Hutchinson, but the theology behind the Antinomian controversy was meticulously debated by the clerical cadre in the years immediately leading up to Hutchinson's famous trials in 1637 and 1638. It is worth attending briefly to some of the ministers' dispute, much of which centered on the problem of assessing and verifying the integrity of a penitent's claim to having received God's grace. This issue of assessing confessional credibility goes to the heart of what was always difficult for the more radically

anti-ecclesiastical theology of the Protestant Reformation, which held that the extension and reception of saving grace was entirely a matter between a believer and God. Cotton was a champion of the soul's exclusive "justification" in and through Christ alone, without intercession or enablement by the visible displays of piety ("works" or "sanctification," variously understood) or the conferral of approval by clerical or civil authority. Asked, in one of the polemical exchanges with the other Bay Area Ministers "[w]hether Sanctification being discerned, may not be, and often is a ground of Primitive Comfort, as it is an Evidence of our being in Christ," Cotton replied (with uncharacteristic succinctness): "I doe not beleeeve that this Sanctification being discerned, is a ground of Primitive Comfort, though when it is evidently discerned, it be an Evidence of our being in Christ."¹⁷ Visible piety does not guarantee spiritual integrity and the conferral of grace; the most it can do is indicate the possibility thereof. The clear implication here is that priests and politicians cannot really decide or even discern whether or not a person is saved: the operation of grace is entirely free from the opinions of the world, even from the opinions of the ordained clergy. Asked whether or not a truly saved person could ever act contrary to the sanctified laws of the land, Cotton answered that "the assurance of a mans good Estate, may be maintained to him, when the frame of his Spirit is growne much degenerate."¹⁸

This was all rather alarming for the ministers, to say nothing for a political authority needing there to be a reasonable correspondence between a person's interior "estate" or conscience and their external behavior. Cotton is essentially declaring – and in doing so agreeing with Roger Williams – that in all matters spiritual, individual conscience is *radically free* from its measurement, evaluation, and regulation by either clerical or political authority, free, that is to say, from its infringement by secular concerns. Theologically speaking, the most degenerate criminal, in the eyes of the state, might be a redeemed saint in the eyes of God. To assert otherwise would be to hold the will of God in thrall to the will of a fallen humanity. At stake in the defense of the inviolability of individual religious conscience is the integrity of God's freedom to confer grace on the chosen as it pleases God, and God alone. Religious integrity, in this reading, identified the boundary of secular authority as that place in which

¹⁷ John Cotton, "Sixteen Questions of Necessary and Serious Consequence," in *The Antinomian Controversy: 1636–1638, a Documentary History*, ed. David D. Hall (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 51–52.

¹⁸ Cotton, "Sixteen Questions," 50.

God's intimate relationship with the individual unfolded autonomously, which is to say that the religious *established* the secular frame, not the other way around, and that, further, the priority of the spiritual persisted within and across all other social and secular relationships.

Anne Hutchinson's story importantly illustrates this point. For many years, scholars accepted the reading of her as a radically religious female outsider to the established male Congregational consensus that banished her from the Bay Colony in the spring of 1638.¹⁹ That this was the reading of the puritan authorities of the day should give us some pause. Like her friend and spiritual mentor John Cotton, Hutchinson appears to have advanced a more radical conception of the true operation of faith and grace than the civil and religious authority of the day was prepared to accept. I say "appears" to have advanced because the only Hutchinson available to us today comes as the result of anonymous third-party reporting of her two trials and by the voluminous commentary provided by her many detractors of the time in the years following immediately upon her expulsion from the colony. We have neither diary nor known authored account or statement of her beliefs, which is to say that "Anne Hutchinson," as historical figure, is largely the product of inference: of third-party interpretation and interested witness. Her religious experiences – her private faith and its report – have given rise to one of the longest historiographical and interpretive traditions of American social, cultural, political, and literary history-making. The invention of Anne Hutchinson, or of the Antinomianism more or less synonymous with her name, is where a postsecular perspective on America's colonial history might help us reconceive and better understand the continuing vitality of religion in political and cultural life today.²⁰

Hutchinson's piety became the core around which a culture of puritanism arranged itself. Indeed, the radical unknowability – the essential privacy, we might say – of her religious experience is arguably what caused all of the fuss in the first place. "Arguably" because her gender has often rightly been identified as foundational to her persecution, and her status as a woman has, over the years, featured prominently in important readings

¹⁹ See, for example, Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism: A Study of Rhetoric, Prejudice, and Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Michael Winship, *The Times and Trials of Anne Hutchinson: Puritans Divided* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005).

²⁰ I make this case at greater length in Bryce Traister, *Female Piety and the Invention of American Puritanism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016).

of the Antinomian Controversy and of puritan New England more generally.²¹ We can only wonder, frustratingly, what might have happened had this wife of a prominent Boston merchant held lay discussions in her kitchen about the day's sermon with other Bay Colony wives that unproblematically affirmed the clerical message. It was her display of a radically private piety that made her womanhood and her report of spiritual experience so uncomfortable for puritan clerical and civil authority, and it was the management of her faith that gives us the historical construct of "Antinomianism" today.

This historical "Anne Hutchinson" is an example of what Talal Asad has called a "formation of the secular." For whatever else we might say about the theological battles of Roger Williams, John Cotton, and Anne Hutchinson, to name only those three, following Asad we would observe that in all of them the sacred was an "object" within both religious and secular orders. The central theological and political issue of her trials was her claim to know the truth and error of faith (including those held by the ordained ministry) by means of direct revelation from God to her. In what turned out to be the key moment of her testimony (insofar as it gave the civil authorities the grounds to condemn her for heresy), Anne Hutchinson claimed God "hath let me to distinguish between the voice of my beloved and the voice of Moses, the voice of John Baptist and the voice of antichrist":

You have no power over my body, neither can you do me any harm – for I am in the hands of the eternal Jehovah, my Saviour, I am at his appointment, the bounds of my habitation are cast in heaven, no further do I esteem of any mortal man than creatures in his hand, I fear none but the great Jehovah, which hath foretold me of these things, and I do verily believe that he will deliver me out of our hands. Therefore, take heed how you proceed against me – for I know that, for this you go about to do to me, God will ruin you and your posterity and this whole state.²²

This is a pretty stirring declaration, made, it would seem, from a place of unapologetic intensity and certainty that provided the civil magistracy with what it felt was a defensible basis for judicial judgment. Spiritual power – or at least its public assertion – became the condition of social

²¹ See Amy Schrager Lang, *Prophetic Women: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

²² "The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court of Newtown," in *The Antinomian Controversy*, ed. Hall, 336–337.

disenfranchisement and victimization by a secular authority perforce established by a belief in religious power.

What is “postsecular” about any of this? Taken on its own, the debate between Cotton and the ministers, as well as the conflict between Anne Hutchinson and, more or less, everybody else, can be viewed as simply another step on the path to a nationhood grounded in what Nancy Ruttenburg has called the “secularization of personality.”²³ These theologically hairsplitting debates of the seventeenth century modulated into debates about political authority and agency in the eighteenth. In the story of religion gradually ceding ground to secularism, democratic politics replace religious polemic; the inviolability of religious belief in the colonial setting emerges as the inalienability of political rights in the national imaginary. But what Ruttenburg and others mean is less that a democratic political narrative displaced religion and consigned it to the historical past than that a compelling conceptual framework for democratic political agency emerged from these religious debates. These debates continue to frame ostensibly secularized political life today.²⁴ The national lexicon of American politics – freedom, entitled rights, a form of electoral sovereignty secured by the franchise – advances a political theology we prefer to think of as secular, when it is really a chapter in a continuous story.

By way of conclusion, let us consider the career of “toleration” as a key area of postsecular reflection and research.²⁵ “Toleration” has until recently been a curiously quiet issue in studies of the seventeenth-century puritan settlement.²⁶ We can look to a lesser-studied episode of seventeenth-century New England settlement history, the so-called Quaker Invasion of the late 1650s, to understand better how a presumptively secular idea like religious toleration emerged from within a deeply religious perspective. The puritan response to the presence of early Quakers in Boston was particularly grisly and involved a series of escalating penal actions against the “Children of the Light” that ranged from fines to imprisonment, banishment, torture, mutilation, and, finally, state-sanctioned execution.

²³ Nancy Ruttenburg, *Democratic Personality: Popular Voice and the Trials of American Authorship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 17–18.

²⁴ Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

²⁵ And not always favorably. For a trenchant critique of toleration as a signal virtue of the modern, see Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²⁶ A recent exception can be found in Nan Goodman, “Sabbatai Sevi and the Ottoman Jews in Increase Mather’s *The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation*,” in *American Literature and the New Puritan Studies*, ed. Bryce Traister (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 38–53.

Indeed, the last woman executed in the chartered colony of Massachusetts (the Salem witch trials came after the loss of its charter) was the Quaker Mary Dyer, who, along with three other Quakers, was hung in Boston in the early 1660s for repeatedly defying the anti-Quaker banishment laws of Boston.

Taken as an indication of the puritan attitude toward religious difference, the Quaker executions might fairly lead us to conclude that the puritans were an intolerant bunch. But this would be a partial view. The Anti-Quaker statutes of seventeenth-century Boston were an example of progressive penal sanction: first, fines and imprisonment. A second offense earned torture and further imprisonment, followed by banishment for another offense. Capital punishment was the sanction for defying the banishment order.²⁷ The puritan intolerance for the practice of Quakerism expressed itself as ordered judicial application, as shocking to our sensibility today, of course, as the idea that religiously motivated persons might hijack airplanes and crash them into buildings, or harass, bully, harm, and kill people whose sexual identity offends their professed beliefs. Less contentiously, we might observe that the progressive ordering of increasing penal severity established in the seventeenth-century Boston anti-Quaker statutes enacted a judicial approach to the punishment of crime we accept as altogether normal today. To be sure, a basic intolerance for Quakerism motivated the creation of those laws in the first place, just as an intolerance for lawlessness grounds today's judicial culture and provides its most familiar slogan in the United States, that is, "zero tolerance."

One could fairly argue it is no historical accident or mere rhetorical sleight of hand that the concept of "zero tolerance" has come to define a predominant standard of judicial agency in modern America. School behavior codes, "respectful workplace" policies, contemporary law enforcement strategy, and modern healthcare education all invoke the concept of "zero tolerance" to capture a sense of modern society's normative commitment to exercise, in a word, *intolerance* for beliefs and practices it deems abhorrent or makes illegal in one way or another.²⁸ In this sense, "zero tolerance" functions more like a statement of belief – an article of faith, if you will – than like the enactment of an actual law or policy. It expresses a culture's attitude about or toward behaviors and beliefs it finds unworthy

²⁷ The successive laws were passed in 1656, 1657, and 1658, when the capital penalty was adopted. See *The General Laws and Liberties of the Massachusetts [sic] Colony: Revised and Re-printed* (Boston, 1672).

²⁸ For a discussion of toleration's relation to contemporary state governmentality and citizenship, see Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 78–106.

of forbearance, or, to put it another way, unworthy of the exercise of tolerance. Of course, “zero tolerance,” as a judicial or policy practice, is always something of a chimera, a matter of interpretation and qualified judgment expressed within the constraints of actual policy, training, and sentencing guidelines. The puritans had “zero tolerance” for the public expressions of Quaker faith, and they expressed their intolerance incrementally, with frightening precision, indicating through the penal codes primarily the refusal to forgive the crime of Quakerism without enacting a penalty they deemed appropriate for the given offense. But, importantly, they understood the progressively severe penal sanctions as an enactment of constraint; indeed, they defended it in those very terms, arguing that in their system of offering a second, third, and even fourth chance to repent and correct, they were making possible a plausible narrative of both Christian and secular redemption. The same argument is, without much effort, made and found today, whether in workplace behavior and management policy in which “progressive discipline” is incrementally meted out in response to identified infractions, or in US courts of law, whose judges are required to follow a “three strikes” approach to repeat narcotics offenders. In this view, there is no such thing as actual “zero tolerance,” so much as there is a belief in the idea that we can achieve a state in which there should never be action or behavior for which one should seek and receive forgiveness or restraint. The threat of intolerance suffices. “Zero tolerance” expresses the desire for the absence of the need for tolerating crime or religious difference altogether. It expresses, in short, the desire for the disappearance of toleration altogether.

It was also the governing fantasy of the colonial puritans, whose very name indicated the fantasy of achieving a coherent state of wholly aligned religious and political beliefs secure from difference or deviation. Our desire for a world in which tolerance need not be exercised because we exist in a state of shared belief and uniform social agency was the socio-political ambition of New England’s settlement. We may well, following Taylor, be living in a postsecular condition in which religious belief exists as a difficult choice (“secular 3”) one makes about how to exist in the world. But we also know, even from this brief survey of the seventeenth-century colonial puritan experience, that faith adherents of an earlier time made choices about how to believe that issued postsecular languages of political and national self-fashioning that persist and still define the country today.

Afterword
The Puritan Imaginary and the Puritans' World

Abram Van Engen

If readers have proceeded through this book from beginning to end, one thing should by now be abundantly clear: scholars of the puritans have laid aside claims of exceptionalism. Part I of this book, "Places," in particular expands the notion of "Puritan New England" beyond New England itself, so that the puritans are located across a broad Atlantic seaboard with connections that run throughout Europe and networks of trade tied to efforts across the world. The puritans were never isolated nor can they be considered the sole origin of American literature, history, politics, rhetoric, and culture.

That basic paradigm shift affects how we understand and study the puritans now. Consider the surprising diminishment of certain key terms once central to puritan studies – such as "typology" and the "jeremiad." Typology is the practice of linking the Old and New Testaments by way of foreshadowing (type) and fulfillment (antitype), so that Jonah's three days in the belly of a whale become the forerunner for Christ's three days in hell after dying on the cross. Beyond Old and New Testament linkages, however, typology could tie biblical history to the present day, so that the ancient Israelites became patterns fulfilled by God's later chosen people. In this regard, the puritans were sent on an "Exodus" from England to America – or so the usual story went. But the basic understanding of typology has been so altered now that we no longer see it as a central feature of puritan writing. Other, nonpuritan authors in Virginia, England, and elsewhere also tried to understand themselves and their circumstances in relation to biblical patterns, figures, and events. And even when puritans turned to biblical precedent in order to understand themselves through scriptural parallels, they were not claiming to be God's singular chosen people. The importance of typology to studies of puritan culture has declined, witnessed by the simple fact that the authors of this volume rarely saw fit to mention the term.

The other surprising absence is “jeremiad.” Jeremiads were a way of preaching that emphasized the Golden Age of the founding generation, from which successive generations had declined. Various scholars, from Perry Miller to Sacvan Bercovitch and beyond, all understood the jeremiad tradition and its rhetorical effects as vital to the formation of American literature and society. But the point of jeremiads, again, is that they singled out a chosen people specially blessed or punished by God. Like the study of “typology,” the scholarship on “jeremiads” turned puritans into a people who saw themselves as distinct – and did so in such a way as to suggest that the puritan angle of vision had become uniquely American. Hence, one of Sacvan Bercovitch’s earliest books was called *Typology and Early American Literature* (1972), and one of his most famous books was called *The American Jeremiad* (1978). But as with the term “typology,” so with jeremiads: we now understand these sermons (these jeremiads) quite differently. They were neither distinctly puritan (they existed just as much elsewhere and earlier) nor were they nearly as prevalent or as prominent as we once thought. The general absence of discussions on typology and the jeremiad in this volume suggests that scholars as a group no longer find these terms as central to the study of puritanism as they once did.

Yet if the Pilgrims and puritans of New England are not the exceptional origin of an exceptional nation – if they are not the singular root and defining source of American literature – why bother with them at all? The answer to that question, today, does not differ from the reasons given for a close study of other early American literatures and cultures. We turn to the puritans, as we turn to others, for the resemblances and influences we find with later lives and literatures as well as for the differences and dead-ends. It is not wrong to say that the puritans, like others, had an impact on the shape of American culture; it is only wrong when we make that impact the one that matters most, erasing the contributions of others. So, we study the puritans in part for continuations, the traits and effects – both good and ill – that persisted long after they were gone. But we study them as well, like we study others, because of what has not persisted. That is, we learn about life and literature by examining ways of living, writing, and perceiving the world that differ from our own. And the puritans certainly do differ. Each culture is unique in its own way; all ways are worth knowing; and by studying the puritans alongside and along with others, we can see in a clearer way what perspectives their particular culture brought to bear, and how those perspectives took shape in the context of vast networks and interactions.

The essays of this volume, taken as a whole, get at those twin aspects of perspective and context in multiple ways. What comes through from beginning to end is the question of where to place one's focus: whether on the puritan imaginary or the puritans' world. By the "puritans' world," I mean the way that historical, circumstantial, interconnected people and events affected how the puritans came to their ideas and how those ideas came to be written down. By the "puritan imaginary," I mean the ideas themselves – the ways in which puritans tried to make sense and meaning out of the world in which they lived.

This sense of the puritan world and the puritan imaginary threads through every essay in the collection and becomes explicit at multiple points. Drew Lopenzina claims that Native agriculture "remains one of the first casualties of the American imaginary." Kristina Bross argues that "the Caribbean shaped the puritan American imaginary." Jan Stievermann contends that "the place of Europe in the Puritan imaginary appears deeply ambiguous." Timothy Sweet traces "the transplantation of the English georgic tradition and its attendant pastoral imaginary within an environment shaped by interactions among various human and nonhuman agents." And Bryce Traister details the "articulation of a Puritan American postsecular imaginary in the United States" while arguing more broadly that "postsecularism helps us think about some of the earliest colonial versions of an American secularist imaginary grounded in Christian, and more specifically Protestant, religious values." To get a sense of puritan studies we can – as these essays do – parse the relation between this puritan imaginary and the world that impinged on it from every side.

The Puritan Imaginary

If the puritans were not deeply concerned with a singular and exceptional status for New England, they were – many of them – deeply concerned with the contours of grace. Grace had to do with salvation, and nothing mattered more than eternal life. As Lisa Gordis explains, "Puritan texts were shaped by theology, both because theories of reading and writing were central to puritan faith and because puritan faith was central to the lives and experiences of many puritan writers." Puritans hoped God would draw near to them and redeem them over the course of a life filled with joys and sorrows. Many of them spent a great deal of effort chasing God's glory, trying to produce, capture, and record particular experiences of justification and sanctification, hoping in the end that they would

themselves be caught by the grace of God. The methods God chose to reach sinners and transform them into saints were called the "means of grace."

These means of grace were both spiritual and material. "Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," Cassander Smith writes, "the corporeal body was central in how puritans especially understood both their relationship to God through Christ and their relationship to each other." Devotion went beyond mental and emotional processes, and those processes themselves depended on material factors. As Matthew Brown's chapter explains, "Heart piety was always complemented by the sensory experience of hand piety (the tactile operation of books) and eye piety (the contemplative gaze on objects and topics of devotion)." In that sense, the means of grace involved the modes of production. While theological ideas certainly led to a great deal of puritan literature, the actual production and distribution of that literature was not a mental or ethereal process at all. It was physical, and it could be dramatically affected by physical conditions and limitations. Jonathan Beecher Field and Matthew Brown both demonstrate that the conditions of print played an enormous part in the making and using of any given text. Moreover, the control of production meant that some had more involvement in the mediations of grace than others: who decided on the means and signs of grace was in part dependent on who had access to power and print.

It was writing and print, however, that played one of the most significant parts in the puritan imaginary. The reason a literary approach to the puritans matters so much is because the puritans were themselves so literary. Approaching puritan literature through the puritan imaginary means seeing their literature as possessing the potential to change a person entirely. That was its point. As Brown explains, "reading was understood not as enlightening nor as diverting but rather as transformative, seeking to change mind and body, prompting action in the world." Such a goal explains so much of the form and function of what they produced. In the chapters by David D. Hall and Lisa Gordis, therefore, we see that the supposedly "plain" style of puritan prose came about because plainness was considered comprehensible, and only the comprehensible could effect change. A sermon might be filled to the brim with elaborate metaphors, extraordinary imagery, and stunning similes, but all of them would draw from the lives of the hearers in order to change those lives and draw them nearer to God. From the standpoint of the puritan imaginary, the way to read puritan literature is to look for its intended effect – especially the effect on the heart, for the generation of proper emotions and experience,

as Joanne van der Woude details, defined that imaginary's aesthetics. Conversion was considered a lifelong process, and a transformative engagement with literature – with sermons, spiritual autobiographies, poetry, steady-selling pious guides to “practical” divinity, and above all the Bible itself – was thought of as essential to redemption. Literature was a means of grace.

Meanwhile, puritans repeatedly turn to the same sources (sermons, guides, and other writings) in order to determine the *signs* of grace, for it was only through the appropriate signs that any puritan could determine whether and where they stood along the path of redemption. Ideally, puritans searched these signs to find comfort and assurance, but often they concluded their inquiries with anxiety and dread. These signs of grace, which could be immense and varied, remind us that for puritans the world was above all a *meaning-filled* world – a place of messages either from God or about God. Nothing was insignificant or irrelevant. At every moment, puritans could look within or without and ask themselves whether they were conforming to the pattern of this world, or whether, indeed, they were being transformed by the renewing of their mind. In that way, they sought to test and approve – to follow, obey, and enjoy – what Romans 12:2 describes as God's “good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The search for that will informed many aspects of their life and literature. Ralph Bauer and Timothy Sweet both demonstrate that it was the will of God, as unveiled in providence, that pointed puritans to a close study and observation of nature. What Sweet describes as the puritan “habit of perception” – what we might think of as the puritan imaginary in action – “could generate a sense of ecological connectedness.” Puritanism meant paying attention to a meaning-filled cosmos. As Bauer explains, “Natural phenomena were put before us not in order to elicit metaphysical speculations but to edify in the contemplation of their supernatural meaning as signs of God's providence.” *Because* of their theological beliefs, not despite them, puritans adopted and adapted the best science of their day, trying to interpret the meaning and messages of the natural world. In this way, religion drove scientific developments, for “a closer study and observation of nature,” as Bauer summarizes, “could reveal the will of God and the workings of the soul.” Wonders and portents, comets and weather patterns, the movements of the stars or the motions of a spider – all of it told of the wonders of God.

As the study of nature demonstrates, the puritan imaginary involved far more than personal concerns or one's own eternal salvation. Afflictions could be sent to households, communities, or whole colonies in order

(as puritans understood it) to awaken the slothful from their sins. But just as importantly, the delivery and discovery of grace always required others – preachers who opened the Word, pastors who responded to anxious fears, family members and neighbors who edified or terrified with personal stories, prayer, or the interpretation of events. Just so, the signs of grace, like the means of grace, were social. Those same family members and neighbors who could edify with a well-placed word might also check one's behavior or judge one's emotional expressions – advising, informing, warning, and counseling insofar as someone advanced in sanctification or slipped in their Christian journey.

More generally, and more importantly, the signs of grace – which might be central to a puritan's self-definition and their sense of salvation – could have enormous consequences across society, involving issues of race, gender, politics, and more. On the one hand, the puritan imaginary claimed that God is no respecter of persons – that all souls stand equal in his sight. On the other hand, when it came to looking for specific signs of grace, puritans identified features, postures, emotions, and behaviors that separated and subordinated women and racial others. As Tamara Harvey explains, "In striving to account for their states of grace, that is, their relationship to a divine order that exceeds human comprehension in language that is unavoidably of this world, men and women both replicated and challenged gender conventions." According to Harvey, for example, Anne Hutchinson's trouble with puritan authorities resulted, in part, from a disagreement about how she and they understood the signs of grace: unlike the ministers and magistrates she confronted, Hutchinson refused "to read bodies as signs."

Bryce Traister, noticing the same tendency in both Anne Hutchinson and John Cotton, sees in the debate a developing relationship between the religious and the secular. Traister points out that the dispute in the Antinomian Controversy largely "centered on the problem of assessing and verifying the integrity of a penitent's claim to having received God's grace." The key question was whether ministers and magistrates could make such an assessment at all, or whether the question of personal salvation – the soul's status and a person's relationship with God – was an entirely private affair, unknowable to others. The argument went back and forth, all in theological terms, but the process teased out a divide between the religious and the secular. It helped identify and create a space where secular authorities had no authority to assess or intervene. In other words, the signs of grace were integral to the religious development of a secular sphere.

Signs of grace, therefore, had social and political stakes. As Christopher Trigg's chapter demonstrates, we can actually see those stakes better when we set aside former claims to exceptionalism that predetermined how puritan literature should be read. The puritan investment in millennial speculation becomes much richer without worrying about how it created American identity or rhetoric, for what the puritans were really doing was trying to imagine a world in which grace finally reigned and flourished in full. "By swapping papers, holding conferences, and publishing sermons and tracts correcting each other's mistaken views," Trigg writes, "they hoped to disseminate a more accurate picture of the things to come, and thereby cultivate on a smaller scale the spirituality, unity, and learning that the millennium would spread around the globe." In other words, thinking through the way signs of grace operated in the puritan imaginary allows us to see a wildly creative imagination operating throughout a major form of their writing. Like science fiction of the modern day, puritan millennial literature presented "visions of possible futures intended to stimulate intellectual and ethical debate about the present." The signs of grace were not just guides to offer comfort, or strictures that caused anxiety, or norms that divided society and too often reified racial and gender oppressions; they were also a source for imagining and reconceptualizing society altogether.

The means of grace and the signs of grace – these twin aspects governing the puritan imaginary – were therefore never static and never insignificant. In the hope of eternal salvation, puritans focused their attention on these means and signs, trying to create a place where the purest means could best be practiced and preserved, while closely examining the signs – in nature, society, and the innermost heart – in order to perceive and approve the meanings and messages of God, his "good, perfect, and pleasing will." As a result, both the means of grace and the signs of grace generated a great deal of puritan literature, and one way to understand that literature is to look for this puritan imaginary at work.

The Puritans' World

If the idea of a "puritan imaginary" describes one way of opening puritan literature – in effect, trying to look through their own eyes and see how and why their literature developed and what it intended to achieve – the idea of the "puritans' world" describes a completely different angle. "In many respects," writes Cassander Smith, "American puritan literature is the literature of contact." Such a perspective allows us to read puritan

literature not for the imaginary that drove it but instead for “the multicultural encounters that energized” it. The essays in this collection remind us that however much puritans sought out the means and signs of grace, such a seemingly transhistorical or transcendental pursuit was always, in fact, historically bounded and contextualized. As Michelle Burnham shows, global networks of trade, English overseas expansion, companies competing for resources and markets, a crisis in cloth or a boom in tobacco – these factors and others moved puritans about in a world where they sought the meaning of such movements as much in the fortunes of a particular commodity as in God’s providence. As a result, Burnham challenges us to reconceive of puritan literature through three terms – *companies*, *violence*, and *translation* – that have nothing to do with typology or the jeremiad or the puritan imaginary more generally. Doing so explodes what counts as the “field” of puritan studies and offers a wholly different way of encountering and understanding what the puritans wrote and why they wrote it. In other words, the idea of grace and its lifelong pursuit provides access to the puritan imaginary – it sheds light on the framework puritans used to make sense of their world – but that is not the only framework, and sometimes not the best framework, with which to make sense of the puritans themselves.

Such dueling frameworks become especially apparent in Drew Lopenzina’s account of how the Pilgrims encountered, and accounted for, Native Americans. On the one hand, Pilgrims depended on Native agriculture to survive. They bartered for food (or stole it), and they learned how to plant corn and manure it with dead fish, as the Indians did. On the other hand, they perceived the land as a “howling wilderness” in which they were attempting to establish the pure, primitive, true churches of God. Where cross-cultural collaboration might have been pursued – or at least perceived – there was instead a transformation of events and persons enacted by the cosmic epic in which the Pilgrims situated themselves. Thus, as Lopenzina points out, the Pilgrim Edward Winslow reported back to England that they would “have perished, unless God had raised some unknown or extraordinary means for our preservation.” Native Americans, in this rendering, disappear as people; through the work of the puritan imaginary, they become instead a means of grace, instruments by which God preserved God’s people. Or as Timothy Sweet writes, “What the Puritans saw as the Lord’s work was accomplished by many nonhuman as well as human agents.” In the pursuit of grace, in the attempt to track and trace it, in the sacred history through which they viewed the world, puritans often transformed Native Americans into one of the many

oppositions arrayed against the godly cause. The “casualties of the American imaginary” that Drew Lopenzina details in his chapter come about through the Pilgrims’ tenacious search for God’s will.

The same kind of dynamic recurs in Kristina Bross’s chapter on the Caribbean. Material connections with the Caribbean were vital to New England’s economy, yet many puritans in New England distanced themselves from the actual people and practices they witnessed in the Caribbean. What we see again is a cognitive dissonance between the puritan imaginary and the puritans’ world, where material needs were met and riches made through a relationship with the Caribbean while that relationship and its centrality to puritan culture was simultaneously disavowed. In their pursuit of grace, the puritans had to set themselves apart – they had to see themselves as different from ungodly others – even in those cases where they closely relied on those ungodly others to get by. Even so, in a tract detailing events in King Philip’s War, we can see the puritan imaginary reassert itself to link that war with a Barbados storm through a search for the providence of God – the meaning of affliction and the signs of grace.

Evan Haefeli’s chapter, meanwhile, usefully tracks the puritans’ world and the puritan imaginary into the colonial intrigues that tore through North America. But Haefeli, like others, also reminds us that the puritan imaginary was not a unitary or homogeneous thing. In fact, the puritans of western Massachusetts and the puritans of Boston might have quite a different view about how the means of grace should be distributed, and that conflict might end up producing competing captivity narratives – both springing from the same world but aimed at interpreting that world through different perspectives. The epic struggle of redemption could remain an overarching framework for the puritan imaginary, but the application of that narrative in particular circumstances – what counted as the means or signs of grace – could vary widely.

In looking askance at the puritan imaginary, as many of the authors do in this volume, a world beyond the means and signs of grace appears. “Whatever Rowlandson ultimately puts on the page, guided by editorial apparatuses,” Cassander Smith writes, “her representations of Natives have been informed, at least in part, by her interactions with them in the material world outside the text.” With that insight in mind, Smith reads puritan literature for the collaborations, the hidden presences, the agencies not necessarily present on the page – looking to uncover the voices and persons who influenced what came into print. In the same way, Tamara Harvey opens up trial transcripts because “for lower class and nonwhite

women, we often have no other way to access their voice in the archive." So, too, Jonathan Beecher Field turns to James Printer, who "prints Eliot's Bible and Rowlandson's captivity narrative," but whose own life story "is one that requires reconstruction, rather than reading." Looking for the puritans' world instead of the puritan imaginary means reading across puritan texts for the unremarked imprint, the recording of a world that appears almost despite the intention of a text.

The puritan imaginary and the puritans' world therefore both remain important when trying to read, study, and understand the literature they left behind. As one last way of seeing how these frameworks sometimes collided and sometimes collapsed, consider Jan Stievermann's account of how Europe functioned both in the predicaments of puritanism and in the puritan American imaginary. On the one hand, as Stievermann explains, "the fate of the New England colonies was chained to European dynamics, over which they had no control but which threatened to pull them in one or the other direction at any moment." This was the world in which the puritans lived. On the other hand, puritans understood that world through a much broader sacred history and cosmic battle between Protestantism (true religion) and Catholicism (led by the anti-Christ). As Bradford positioned Native Americans within a struggle rooted in the Reformation, so, in the case of European developments, a millennial framework kept returning to make sense and meaning of each event. "Puritans interpreted political events through an apocalyptic framework," Stievermann writes. This was the puritan imaginary at work.

Which was bigger? Which incorporated and influenced the other? Is it the puritan imaginary we should pay attention to, or the puritan world? No doubt we must look to both, for they worked on each other mutually. But consider how the particular angle a scholar takes to puritan studies might emphasize one framework or the other. On the one hand, we might say the puritan imaginary is clearly the larger interpretative framework, for whatever happened in the world – the booms and busts of markets, wars and rumors of war, storms or tempests or moderate days, personal successes and personal failures – all of it could be made to make sense according to the meanings offered by the puritan imaginary at work. The world was orchestrated according to grand narratives of personal redemption and epic stories of sacred history. God moved in these ways, and the point was to move with him. Within the puritan imaginary, everything could be made to fit.

Or, conversely, we could say that the puritan world is clearly the larger framework, for the puritan imaginary was nothing but responsive and

reactive. Every day, day after day, events unfolded in the world which dramatically affected the puritans. The booms and busts of markets, wars and the rumors of war, storms or tempests or moderate days, personal successes and failures – all of these were the prime movers of the puritans, and the puritan imaginary always had to be reshaped and readjusted, refined and retooled to make sense and meaning out of the random affairs of any given moment. As a result, it recorded what it never intended to record. The point is to look aside at the imaginary, or perhaps through and beyond it, to the world that kept interfering, kept leaving its mark, despite the puritans' practices and beliefs.

Puritan literature requires scholars who come at it through both perspectives, for the work they do together will be greater than any individual's particular view. That principle is on full display here, for this collection is made far stronger by the sum of its parts. The literary history of puritanism in this collection is a series of revisitations offered from multiple angles of vision. And what comes through from chapter to chapter is the necessity of understanding both the puritan imaginary and the puritans' world, seeing as the puritans saw and looking askance at their literature as well. By setting side by side each approach and asking how they relate – by setting aside old questions and assumptions of exceptionalism – the scholars of this volume have joined efforts to fashion a new history of American puritan literature.